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‘Who Would Write?’: Andrew Marvell and the Act of Writing

by

John Harry McWilliams

**A dissertation submitted to the
University of Bristol in accordance
with the requirements of the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Faculty of Arts**

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Abstract

This thesis explores Andrew Marvell's career-long preoccupation with the act of writing, and argues that, for Marvell, writing was not just the medium in which he worked, but was itself a topic for careful attention. Chapter 1 presents the current, highly politicised, state of Marvell criticism, and argues that this critical orthodoxy needs revising. Chapter 2 offers a survey of Marvell's considerations of writing, arguing for a consistently questioning attitude towards his medium. The chapter also places Marvell's preoccupation in the context of the radical changes to writing which occurred in his lifetime. Chapter 3 looks at some of Marvell's writings which respond to the English Civil War and its aftermath, suggesting that these writings show a particularly troubled and problematic relationship to the written word. Chapter 4 examines two poems which Marvell published in explicitly Royalist contexts just after the Civil War, and reads them as commentaries on issues of writing and publication which beset Royalists at this time. Chapter 5 charts Marvell's most important literary relationship—that with John Milton—and the chapter culminates in a detailed reading of 'On *Paradise Lost*', a poem in which Marvell's questioning reticence about writing meets Milton's terrifying confidence head-on. Chapter 6 provides a new reading of 'An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return From Ireland', looking at that poem—which starts with the writerly figure of the 'forward Youth'—as Marvell's most troubled but brilliant meditation on the act of writing.

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I must also mention a recent encounter with an outstanding Marvell scholar. At a late stage in the research for this thesis I met Nigel Smith, who has just completed work on an edition of Marvell’s poems that will set new standards in the field. I owe him

my sincerest thanks for his encouragement of this and other projects, and his generosity both in reading portions of my work, and in allowing me to read some of his work prior to publication.

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A version of Section 3 of Chapter 4 has been published as “‘A Storm of Lamentations Writ’: *Lachrymae Musarum* and Royalist Culture After the Civil War’ in *Yearbook of English Studies* 33 (2003), pp. 273–289.

I would like to dedicate this thesis to the memory of my father, Bill McWilliams, to whom I owe so much of my early interest in thinking about and discussing books and ideas of all kinds.

Author's Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the Regulations of the University of Bristol. The work is original except where indicated by special reference in the text and no part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other degree.

Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University of Bristol.

The dissertation has not been presented to any other University for examination either in the United Kingdom or overseas.

SIGNED: John McWilliam,

DATE: 06/08/03

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Chapter 1—Introduction

The State of Play: Problems with the ‘Contextual Revolution’

Writing in 1978, Philip Larkin said that ‘much of modern Marvell criticism has a curiously inhibiting effect on one’s ability to read the poems, just as a description of a chair in terms of whizzing molecules would make one afraid to sit down on it’.¹ He was complaining about critics who, as he saw it, over-read Marvell, turning his poems into etymological playgrounds which then failed to work as poems. The general result, according to Larkin, was that Marvell came to be viewed as a poet ‘of enigma, of concealed meaning, of alternative explanation, of ambiguous attitude’ (p. 252). We might want to protest that this image of Marvell is apt enough, given that his most distinctive poems are brilliant precisely because they perplex the reader, perhaps perplexed Marvell himself, and often tacitly make perplexity their subject. Marvell’s best poems rarely let the reader settle down with them, always insisting on the troubles and difficulties inherent in their own form and language; to push Larkin’s suggestive analogy for a moment, if Marvell’s poems *were* chairs, then they would be ones which were sufficiently aware of the pieces that made them up, that sitting on them might well be an uncomfortable experience. However, Larkin’s complaint is chiefly interesting here because, for a comment written only twenty-five years ago, it sounds so astonishingly dated: what he describes is simply no longer what critics of Marvell generally do, and the image of Marvell as enigmatic, multivalent, and ambiguous has given way to something quite different. The typical article on Marvell coming out of the academy in the early twenty-first century would certainly not be one which looked so closely at a lyric poem as to lose sight of the wider picture; on the contrary it would be a contextual argument, probably looking at prose or verse satire, and would celebrate Marvell’s political rather than his literary achievements.

Indeed, since Larkin wrote his comments, Marvell criticism has undergone what might be called a ‘contextual revolution’. The title ‘revolution’ is apt if only because its proponents enjoy seeing themselves as overthrowing an old order: historicists, of various kinds, have proclaimed that they are in the business of de-

¹ Philip Larkin, ‘The Changing Face of Andrew Marvell’ in Philip Larkin, *Required Writing* (London: Faber, 1983), pp. 245–253, p. 248.

stabilising the dominance of formalist criticism. The revolution is closely related to other similar moves in literary criticism of the period and beyond—including cultural materialism and new historicism (particularly with regard to Shakespeare studies), the nuanced historicism led by Jerome McGann in Romantic studies, and the more traditional return to context seen in Milton studies—all of which, in various ways, reacquaint literature with history by way of different versions of historicism.² Indeed, surfing on this fashionable (and increasingly institutionally powerful) wave of historicisms, recent Marvell criticism has argued more strongly than before that Marvell is best returned to his mid-seventeenth century context where he can be properly understood.³

The 'old' view of Marvell about which Larkin complained was particularly indebted to a famous and influential essay on Marvell by T.S. Eliot, first published in 1921. There he states that:

² Some major books which illustrate this sea-change are: Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); Jerome McGann, *The Beauty of Inflections: Literary Investigations in Historical Method and Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985); and Jerome McGann (ed.), *Historical Studies and Literary Criticism* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985); and numerous collections and 'readers' of New Historicism including Kiernan Ryan (ed.), *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism: A Reader* (London: Arnold, 1996) and H. Aram Veeser (ed.), *The New Historicism Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

³ Some of the key works in this 'contextual revolution' are: John Wallace, *Destiny His Choice: The Loyalty of Andrew Marvell* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968); Annabel Patterson, *Marvell and the Civic Crown* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978); R.I.V. Hodge, *Foreshortened Time: Andrew Marvell and Seventeenth Century Revolutions* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1978); Warren Chernaik, *The Poet's Time: Politics and Religion in the Work of Andrew Marvell* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Michael Wilding, *Dragons Teeth: Literature in the English Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987); Kevin Sharpe and Stephen Zwicker (eds), *Politics of Discourse: The Literature and History of Seventeenth-Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); Conal Condren and A.D. Cousins (eds), *The Political Identity of Andrew Marvell* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1990); Thomas Healy and Jonathan Sawday (eds), *Literature and the English Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Thomas N. Corns, *Uncloistered Virtue: English Political Literature, 1640–1660* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); Stephen Zwicker, *Lines of Authority: Politics and English Literary Culture, 1649–1689* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993); David Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric and Politics, 1627–1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); and Warren Chernaik and Martin Dzelzainis (eds), *Marvell and Liberty* (London: Palgrave, 1999). In other fields, powerful reservations have been entered regarding the kind of criticism I am describing, and I am generally indebted to three other critics who have challenged, in various ways, aspects of what I am calling the contextual revolution: Graham Bradshaw, in particular, *Misrepresentations: Shakespeare and the Materialists* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993); the work of John Lee (and discussions we have had) including his article 'The Man who Mistook his Hat: Stephen Greenblatt and the Anecdote' in *Essays in Criticism* 45 (1995), pp. 285–300; and some of the work of James Loxley, especially his chapter 'The Prospect of History: Marvell's Landscapes in Contemporary Criticism' in Warren Chernaik and Martin Dzelzainis (eds), *Marvell and Liberty*, pp. 173–194, which, although he comes to somewhat different conclusions to my own, I find very helpful.

The persons who opposed Charles I and the persons who supported the Commonwealth were not all of the flock of the Rabbi Zeal-of-the-land Busy or the United Grand Junction Ebenezer Temperance Association. Many of them were gentlemen of the time who merely believed, with considerable show of reason, that government by a Parliament of gentlemen was better than government by a Stuart [...] Being men of education and culture, even of travel, some of them were exposed to that spirit of the age which was coming to be the French spirit of the age. This spirit, curiously enough, was quite opposed to the tendencies latent or the force active in Puritanism; the contest does great damage to the poetry of Milton; Marvell, an active servant of the public, but a lukewarm partisan, and a poet on a smaller scale, is far less injured by it.⁴

Less injured than Milton, then, but injured all the same, and the implication of Eliot's talk of 'contest' between Puritanism and 'culture', is that Marvell is at his best when this contest is not really an issue. Although admitting that Marvell (and Milton) were political men, Eliot is at pains to explain why this was excusable: Marvell was 'exposed to' the politics of the time and therefore, even though he was a civilised, educated, well-travelled man, became contaminated by those politics, becoming a 'lukewarm partisan'. Eliot's conclusion—that Marvell's 'best poems are not very many'—is, I would suggest, intimately linked to his belief that Marvell's political work is secondary and contaminated and, for Eliot, the thus limited role for the Marvell critic is to 'squeeze the drops of the essence of two or three poems' (p. 63).

Others, taking up Eliot's arguments, have been more detailed and specific about when Marvell wrote his best poetry. The most extreme case of this is, perhaps, Patrick Cruttwell who argues, in *The Shakespearean Moment* (1954), that after the Civil War writers were unable to write with the same kind of balance and poise as before, and that a certain kind of literature—of which Marvell at his best is a fine exponent—was no longer possible.⁵ Another version of this is given by Isabel Rivers, who argues for a 'three phase' model of Marvell's writing.⁶ Marvell's career, she asserts, began with lyric poetry, continued with a period in which Marvell 'wrote a different kind of poetry, assuming a direct relationship between life and art' (p.102), and ended with a phase in which his works were 'devoted to exposing' the threat of

⁴ T.S. Eliot, 'Andrew Marvell' in W.H. Baggeley (ed.), *Andrew Marvell, 1621–1678: Tercentenary Tributes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1922), pp. 63–78, pp. 65–66. This essay was first published in the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1921.

⁵ Patrick Cruttwell, *The Shakespearean Moment and its Place in the Poetry of the Seventeenth Century* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1954).

⁶ Isabel Rivers, *The Poetry of Conservatism 1600–1745: A Study of Poets of Public Affairs from Jonson to Pope* (Cambridge: Rivers Press, 1973).

absolutism and intolerance (p. 103). She admits that 'readers and critics of Marvell [...] are in no doubt as to the disastrous effect his commitment to public life [...] had on the quality of his poems' (p. 103).⁷

It is precisely these kinds of assumptions and this kind of approach which have been searchingly questioned, even railed against, by proponents of the contextual revolution: literature and politics are now considered to be inextricably intertwined, not at odds with each other, and so very different arguments about the shape of Marvell's career have been asserted. The fact that political engagement is now considered to be a benefit rather than a hindrance to literary production has meant that works which are clearly and unequivocally political—such as, in prose, *The Rehearsal Transpros'd* and *An Account of the Growth of Popery, and Arbitrary Government in England* and, in verse, 'The Loyall Scot' and 'The last Instructions to a Painter'—have become the subject of more extended critical analyses and celebration, and are now central to serious considerations of Marvell.⁸ Moreover, the chronology which assumes that Marvell must have written his best literary work when he was not politically active has come under severe question, as critics have pointed out that poems such as 'To His Coy Mistress', 'The Definition of Love', and other much loved lyrics could well have emerged not out of the Edenic retirement of Nun Appleton, but out of the bustle of Westminster where Marvell was an MP for two decades. This is supported by an important article by Alan Pritchard which gives evidence that 'The Garden'—most archetypal of all Marvell's so-called 'detached' lyrics—was written not in the early 1650s, but in the Restoration.⁹

⁷ See also J. B. Leishman, who writes that Marvell's poor writing in the Restoration was the result of the 'constricting and dehumanising influence of party politics', in *The Art of Marvell's Poetry* (London: Hutchinson, 1966), p. 21. An earlier example of a similar view is A.C. Benson, writing in 1892, who describes Marvell's 'high-spirited beginning, the delicate ideals, the sequestered ambitions of youth, and their lamentable decline' in Elizabeth Story Donno (ed.), *Andrew Marvell: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1978), p. 261.

⁸ For an extreme version of the 'old' view of Marvell's satire, see, again, A.C. Benson, who states that: '*The Rehearsal Transpros'd* and *The Divine in Mode* are peculiarly distasteful examples of a kind of controversy then in vogue. They are answers to publications, and to the ordinary reader contrive to be elaborate without being artistic, personal without being humorous, and digressive without being entertaining; in short, they combine the characteristics of tedium, dullness, and scurrility to a perfectly phenomenal degree' in Donno (ed.), *Andrew Marvell: The Critical Heritage*, p. 261.

⁹ Alan Pritchard, 'Marvell's "The Garden": A Restoration Poem?' in *Studies in English Literature* 23 (1983), pp. 372–388. In many cases, the date of Marvell's lyric poetry is still highly uncertain, given that much of it remained unpublished until after his death.

There has also been a shift in how we assess Marvell's political beliefs, such as they were, and also how we think of his biography more generally. For much of the twentieth century, it was usually assumed that Marvell was a man generally unwilling to be involved in politics, who was dragged less than enthusiastically (*pace* Eliot) into what some now call the English Revolution. The fact that he left England during the Civil War, and his subsequent semi-rural retirement as tutor to Thomas Fairfax's daughter, were seen as the best indications of Marvell's temperament and political inclination early in his life. Fairfax, it was frequently pointed out, may have disapproved of the regicide, resigned from government when he considered that Cromwell was going too far in his aggressive military tactics, and Fairfax later was to usher Charles II into London. Fairfax was, then, key to Parliament's victory in the Civil War, but to some extent turned against Cromwell's more radical revolution. Marvell's association with Fairfax, himself something of a poet, and in particular Marvell's time at Nun Appleton (where it was assumed he wrote most of his lyric poetry), was seen as key to understanding his balanced and somewhat apolitical inclinations. His later involvement in politics was played down as necessary careerism rather than partisanship; Eliot's tag 'lukewarm partisan' seemed to stick, and in any case, as we have seen, it was assumed that this later political career was not when he wrote his best poetry. Far more common than emphasising Marvell's involvement with Cromwellian and proto-Whig politics was to argue that Marvell was a more or less committed Royalist during the latter part of the Civil War. The evidence for this is, in fact, substantial, given that he contributed more than once to Royalist verse collections, portrayed Charles I sympathetically in 'An Horatian Ode', and wrote two vicious Royalist satires.¹⁰ Even in the Restoration he wrote, of the Civil War:

I think the Cause was too good to have been fought for. Men ought to have trusted God; they ought and might have trusted the King with that whole matter [...] The

¹⁰ 'Upon the Death of Lord Hastings' and 'To His Noble Friend Mr. Richard Lovelace, upon his Poems' were both published as part of Royalist verse collections (see Chapter 4); 'An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return From Ireland' was unpublished but certainly written in 1650; and 'Tom May's Death' and 'An Elegy upon the Death of my Lord *Francis Villiers*' could legitimately be read as outright Royalist propaganda.

King himself being of so accurate and piercing a judgment, would soon have felt where it stuck.¹¹

Later in *The Rehearsal Transpros'd* Marvell claimed that he 'never had any, not the remotest relation to publick matters, nor correspondence with the persons then predominant, until the year 1657' (p. 203). This evidence, taken together, enabled Marvell to be imagined in a great Royalist tradition of poets, as the kind of poet of whom one of his heroes, Ben Jonson, would have heartily approved.

Now, however, after the contextual revolution, Marvell's early Royalist verses are usually dismissed as youthful voicings of Royalist positions which conceal more fundamental anti-monarchical, proto-Whig leanings; 'An Horatian Ode' is often read as in fact committed to Cromwell;¹² and Marvell's Restoration comments quoted above against the Civil War are read as track-covering lies.¹³ Most commentators now stress Marvell's later political commitment to various noble causes, including religious toleration, democracy and, some have argued, Republicanism.¹⁴ The refined, gentlemanly, educated and well travelled character seen in Eliot's account has, in turn, given way to a hostile, suspicious man who, according to John Aubrey, 'would not play the good-fellow in any man's company in whose hands he would not trust his life',¹⁵ received death-threats, died under suspicion of poisoning, and, as David Norbrook is keen to point out, 'was ineffective as a Member [of Parliament], partly because he was unable to control his temper'.¹⁶

With this has come a reassessment of what makes Marvell worthy of critical, and historical, attention. For much of the twentieth century, as one might expect,

¹¹ D.I.B. Smith (ed.), *The Rehearsal Transpros'd and The Rehearsal Transpros'd the Second Part* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 135, hereafter cited as Smith, *R.T.* Later in that passage, Marvell talks of 'his present Majesties happy Restauration', p. 135.

¹² See, for example, the reading given in Wilding, *Dragons Teeth*, in which he concludes that 'An Horatian Ode' should be read as 'an appeal to the poet-intellectuals and other members of the elite to identify with the Cromwellian army group' (p. 137). The extent to which this, 'Cromwellian' reading has become the norm is indicated by the fact that Stephen Greenblatt (a contextual revolutionary from another field) is able to refer to the 'function' of the poem as 'obvious [...] celebrat[ing] civil or military virtue' in Cromwell. See Greenblatt's essay 'Culture' in Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (eds), *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, 2nd edn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 225–232, p. 227.

¹³ See Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic*, p. 243.

¹⁴ See Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic*, and also Annabel Patterson, 'Andrew Marvell and the Revolution' in N.H. Keeble (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Writing of the English Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 107–123.

¹⁵ John Aubrey, *Aubrey's Brief Lives* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 268.

¹⁶ Henning (ed.), *The History of Parliament*, quoted in Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic*, p. 244.

Marvell was valued for the supreme artistry of a very few of his best poems, and also for his ability to 'rise above' the turbulent politics of his time. Typical book titles included *The Art of Marvell's Poetry*, *Marvell's Ironic Vision*, *Andrew Marvell's Poetry of Criticism*, and *Marvell's Pastoral Art*, all of which indicate that Marvell's most important qualities were not his political virtues, but his artistic supremacy.¹⁷ Now, however, Marvell is lauded for his admirable political commitment, and the effectiveness of his Restoration pamphleteering. The somewhat Romantic vision of the lyric poet all but unknown in his own lifetime has receded, and in its place has emerged the image of a strident controversialist and polemicist who can be celebrated, if necessary, entirely apart from his largely unpublished literary achievements. One defence of this is the fact that it is unquestionably truer to the view of Marvell held by most of his contemporaries and by those in the two centuries after his death. In his own lifetime Marvell was famous as an effective pamphleteer and satirist, and afterwards was something of a hero to figures such as Rochester and Swift. Although his poems were known to some, and celebrated by others, the dominant view of Marvell for a long time was as a staunch defender of liberty and toleration in a time at which these things were under constant threat from the Stuart monarchy.¹⁸ This is another way in which contextual 'revolution' is an apt title: it has, in many ways, turned our view of Marvell back to an old orthodoxy.

This revolutionary shift in approach to Marvell's life and work is aptly demonstrated by the two most important collections of essays on Marvell to appear in

¹⁷ J.B. Leishman, in *The Art of Marvell's Poetry*, indicates his intent to look at the non-satiric poetry of Marvell, describes Marvell's 'rare artistic perfection' (p. 9), declares him to be 'singularly uncommitted', and argues that 'the facts of his life tell us nothing about the motive-power of his poetry' (p. 11); Harold E. Toliver's book, *Marvell's Ironic Vision* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), barely mentions prose works, centres firmly on the lyric poetry, and makes its intentions clear with the early statement that 'historical discussion is quarantined in the first chapter, except for local outbreaks' (p. vii); Rosalie Colie, in *'My Ecchoing Song': Andrew Marvell's Poetry of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970) argues that Marvell's poetry is unique because of its extraordinarily self-reflexive qualities; and Donald M. Friedman, in *Marvell's Pastoral Art* (London: Routledge, 1970), states that 'Marvell exhibits throughout his career a careful, almost professional, interest in the characteristics and potentialities of verse forms and poetic genres' (p. 9).

¹⁸ However, the extent to which Marvell was unknown as a lyric poet in his own lifetime and after his death is often overstated. Marvell contributed poems to various poetry collections and publication projects under his own name and Marvell's opponent in *The Rehearsal Transpros'd*, Samuel Parker, makes reference (albeit hostile) to Marvell's poetry, describing him as a 'strolling, ragged, half-starved poetaster' and stating that 'as often as our poet spoke [in the House of Commons], he was cudgelled for it' (my italics) in John Carey (ed.), *Andrew Marvell* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), pp. 35–36. Moreover, several critics prior to the twentieth century have celebrated Marvell's poetry, including William Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Hartley Coleridge, who describes Marvell's

the last twenty-five years. *Approaches to Marvell*, published in 1978 as a follow-up to a major series of lectures marking the tercentenary of Marvell's death, takes a broadly formalist approach to Marvell's poetry: Christopher Hill is alone in primarily considering Marvell's politics, Marvell's prose is almost entirely ignored, and close reading is to the fore.¹⁹ In 1999 the suggestively titled *Marvell and Liberty* was published as a result of a major Marvell conference in London. This collection is dominated by political and contextual readings, and Marvell's prose and verse satire are given extended consideration. Out of fourteen essays, four directly discuss Restoration prose work; three essays dissect Marvell's posthumous political reputation; three look at political verse (one of these being an argument for the committed politics of 'An Horatian Ode'); one essay (by Martin Dzelzainis) makes little claim to being literary analysis at all and is, in fact, a straightforward, though interesting, historical piece on Marvell's attitude to the Earl of Castlemaine; and one essay looks at the political beliefs Marvell shared with some Restoration dramatists. John Creaser's essay on Marvell's versification is as lonely in its direct interest in poetry and poetic form as Christopher Hill's essay on politics was in *Approaches to Marvell*.²⁰

This change in emphasis is not by accident: the editors of *Marvell and Liberty* themselves point out the limitations of *Approaches to Marvell*—and of the type of criticism which that collection represents—and state that their own book 'attempts to provide a long overdue corrective' (p. 4) to this tradition. This itself is a common manoeuvre for the contextual critic: many of the scholars I am describing openly see themselves as revolutionary.²¹ In this case, however, the correctional objective is at

relative popular neglect as a lyric poet as 'disgraceful to English booksellers (we say not to the English nation)', in Donno (ed.), *Andrew Marvell: The Critical Heritage*, p. 158.

¹⁹ C.A. Patrides (ed.), *Approaches to Marvell: The York Tercentenary Lectures* (London: Routledge, 1978). A further indication that in this collection prose is barely considered at all is the collection's Index, which is an 'Index to Marvell's Poems'.

²⁰ John Creaser's title itself "'As one scap't strangely from Captivity": Marvell and Existential Liberty' is illuminating, in that it suggests the ingenuity which is needed in order to steer away from the overtly political title of the volume. Creaser's title in fact refers to Marvell's 'captivity' by his chosen rhyme and metre schemes.

²¹ See also, for example, the opening of Michael Wilding's book *Dragons Teeth*, which begins by describing T. S. Eliot's 'depoliticising approach' (p. 1), and then states its own aim to 'retrieve the repressed context, historical and political, of some of the major texts of the English Revolution' (p. 2); Kevin Sharpe and Stephen Zwicker introduce *Politics of Discourse* with the statement that 'Criticism has tended to contrast the aesthetic and the political. We think of genius and partisanship as at odds' (p. 2), before stating their own idea that in fact the languages of seventeenth-century literature 'were perforce political [...] there is an important sense in which no seventeenth-century literature is not also

odds with the previous pages of their introduction in which they give their own (more affirmative) version of what I have described as the contextual revolution. They even make a joke at the expense of New Historicist institutional dominance and 'adapt George Morley's joke about Arminianism in the England of Archbishop Laud: 'what do New Historicists hold? all the best chairs in English'.²² Why, then, is a 'corrective' still necessary to a tradition of criticism which has, as they admit, been long subdued by the contextual revolution of which they are duly proud?

The answers to this question might lie, partly at least, in the ways in which far wider changes afoot in literary studies in the last twenty years—in particular the strenuous challenges presented by various strands of theory, as well as by claims of historical, cultural, and media studies—have threatened to marginalize literary studies, or even force it out of existence as a separate and unique discipline.²³ In a field which is currently in something of a crisis of self-definition, then, to argue that your work, and the work of your like-minded colleagues, is an important and necessary 'corrective' to a pernicious past tradition lends weight to the case. Furthermore, if it is argued—as it is by, for example, David Norbrook, Annabel Patterson, and Michael Wilding—that this work corrects a tradition that was perniciously 'Right Wing', then it turns what was once a literary issue into a political one, and gains all the weight and urgency that this commands. Also, in the case of historian-critics such as John Wallace and Christopher Hill (and, latterly, Kevin Sharpe and Martin Dzelzainis), to take up a more directly historical approach in the name of literary studies answers some of the more searching methodological questions posed by theory and cultural studies. In this way, the study of Marvell can be reconceived as an activity defensible because it is both historically and politically important.

Although we might immediately question whether Marvell would really have been worth all the fuss in literature departments if he had *not* produced his brilliant

political' (p. 3)—here one might protest that this depends entirely on how broadly one defines 'the political'; and Tom Paulin's introduction to *The Faber Book of Political Verse* (London: Faber, 1986), which opens with the assertion that 'We have been taught, many of us, to believe that art and politics are separated by the thickest and most enduring of partitions' (p. 15), going on to argue that this separation needs challenging.

²² Warren Chernaik and Martin Dzelzainis, 'Introduction' to *Marvell and Liberty*, p. 2.

²³ For a particularly gloomy vision of this, see the work of Harold Bloom, especially 'An Elegy for the Canon' in *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages* (London: Macmillan, 1995).

poems, it is clear that this contextual revolution has provided a necessary and important corrective to a previous critical practice. Marginalising Marvell's politics, as Eliot and his followers did, created gaps in our knowledge of Marvell as well as misunderstandings of his work (including the lyric poems themselves), and left a very few poems in something of a critical vacuum. Reading Marvell's greatest lyrics alongside his prose work and verse satire does help us to understand Marvell's achievement: a large number of crucial insights have been gained by those working, broadly, within this new contextual approach. However, as has already become apparent, there are problems with this critical practice, and the conceptual problems it faces are becoming more, rather than less, acute; its oppositional stance, in fact, is becoming increasingly inappropriate the further formalist critical dominance recedes into the past. The question arises, in other words, of how the proponents of this contextual revolution are coping with being the entrenched ruling powers.

This problem is particularly aptly demonstrated by the career of Annabel Patterson—who is very much a product of, as well as a driving force behind, the contextual revolution—and is currently one of the most institutionally powerful Marvell critics.²⁴ Her first book on Marvell, *Marvell and the Civic Crown*, published in 1978 when she was a young Associate Professor in Canada, was indeed revolutionary, and had many noble and judicious objectives. Patterson states her admiration in particular for Rosalie Colie's book *'My Ecchoing Song': Andrew Marvell's Poetry of Criticism*, but argues that 'the great silence it preserved on the subject of Marvell's political writing' marred Colie's work as a complete assessment of his writing.²⁵ Patterson's objective, on the other hand, was to look at 'Marvell the Writer, who considered the motives, sanctions, quality, and results of *everything* he wrote' (p. 4), and to rediscover the Marvell who 'believed profoundly in the classical ideal of rhetoric as a politically significant force' (p. 9). One might argue that the latter statement rather seems to prejudge what Marvell considered to be the 'motives, sanctions, quality and results' of his own writing (we might ask, for example, if it allows for a Marvell who, sometimes at least, believed that writing could be politically *insignificant*, or that writing and politics could be at odds). Indeed, the

²⁴ A Professor at Yale University, she has published three books (as well as numerous articles) on Marvell and is the general editor of the forthcoming complete prose works of Marvell.

²⁵ Patterson, *Marvell and the Civic Crown*, p. 7.

book does finally fail to live up to its initial, potentially fertile challenge. However, published in 1978, the same year as the formalist and narrowly focussed *Approaches to Marvell*, and also the year in which Larkin complained about the extremity and predominance of close readings of Marvell's lyrics, Patterson's book was, in the broadest sense, revolutionary, and did much to widen the scope of Marvell studies. Moreover, *Marvell and the Civic Crown* is carried through by its sheer weight of contextual knowledge and insight: this is clearly a major work of Marvell criticism, and will remain so for many decades to come.

However, ideas which were necessarily revolutionary and valuable in 1978 might, given the dominance of contextual criticism in recent years, sound rather out-worn now. Patterson, though, who moved to Yale University in 1994 (eventually to take up a prestigious Sterling Professorship of English), has become more rather than less strident in her assertion of the kinds of oppositional political arguments given in *Marvell and the Civic Crown*. The essay that she contributed to *Marvell and Liberty* (1999) gives a sense of this, opening with the claim that 'the Marvell admired in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has been almost invisible for most of the twentieth century' (p. 23). Patterson, in response to this, states her intention to return to 'the Marvell revered by Grosart',²⁶ Marvell's great nineteenth century Whig editor, having previously described Grosart's edition of Marvell as 'a brilliant pre-emptive strike from the left' (p. 25). But, we might protest, the 'Marvell revered by Grosart' has not been 'invisible' at all: as we have seen, work by Christopher Hill, John Wallace, David Norbrook, Michael Wilding, Warren Chernaik and many others (not least Patterson herself), has extensively dissected and celebrated Marvell's political achievements. There might be a suspicion, then, that this oppositional stance has itself become as ossified and inflexible as what it attacks.

More recently still, in Patterson's contribution to *The Cambridge Companion to Writing of the English Revolution* (2001), these problems are even more marked and in this case seem potentially damaging to Marvell. Patterson's opening claim in that article is that Marvell's revolutionary writings:

²⁶ Patterson, 'Marvell and Secret History' in Warren Chernaik and Martin Dzelzainis (eds), *Marvell and Liberty*, p. 25.

suggest one simple, and to many, unpalatable truth: that Marvell, after initial reluctance, committed himself absolutely to the Revolution, in so far as it could be identified with the leadership of Oliver Cromwell.²⁷

Despite the fact that disputing such a statement runs the risk of appearing to find such a 'truth' *a priori* 'unpalatable'—and therefore, by implication, to be someone who is politically conservative and wishes Marvell to be so too—this claim is worth dissecting. We might initially note the extent to which Patterson buys into the Whig discourse of 'revolution' to describe the middle years of the seventeenth century in England. Neil Keeble, Patterson's editor in the *Cambridge Companion*, stresses the somewhat anachronistic use of the term, noting its roots in the work of Christopher Hill, and acknowledging the challenge made by revisionist history to Hill's grand narratives.²⁸ (Many argue, in other words, that there was no such thing as the 'English Revolution' and certainly not one which contemporaries would have recognised as such).²⁹ Patterson, however, avoids such historiographical subtleties, and writes as if there was, without doubt, something called the 'English Revolution' known as such to those alive at the time, which Cromwell might be identified with, and to which an individual could be unequivocally 'committed'. This is generally problematic, but particularly so in relation to Marvell: how can Marvell be confidently described as being committed 'absolutely' to Cromwell, given that 'An Horatian Ode' (and to a certain extent 'The First Anniversary') have rightly been identified as poems which, whatever their political decisions, are very much tentative, rather than 'absolute', in their support of Cromwell? Even if we go down the route of contextualising and politicising Marvell's work, the whole picture is as far away from 'absolute' and 'simple' as could be imagined.

²⁷ Patterson, 'Andrew Marvell and the Revolution' in Keeble (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Writing of the English Revolution*, p. 107.

²⁸ See Keeble's 'Introduction' to *The Cambridge Companion to Writing of the English Revolution*, pp. 1–7.

²⁹ See, for example, Conrad Russell, *The Causes of the English Civil War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), in which it is asked: 'Does the attempt to impose a common label of 'revolution' on many disparate events result in a typology which makes us misunderstand those events by treating them as more generic, less individual, than they really were?' (p. 8). Broadly speaking, Russell answers in the affirmative, stating that 'we should not exaggerate the extent of revolutionary upheaval even in 1647–9' (p. 9). A great benefit of 'revisionist' history such as Russell's in relation to literature is that, unlike more teleological history, it allows 'individual' events to be historically important and also unique; one might suggest that works of literature are just such events and should not, as is too often the case, be swallowed up into grand historical narratives.

Patterson's essay proceeds with a section entitled 'Revolutionary Poems' which aims to establish and list the poems Marvell certainly wrote in the 'Revolutionary period'. This is, at first sight, an admirable project, because our view of Marvell has very often been skewed by incorrect or presumed chronology. However, her execution of this task has its own rather obvious bias, which can be seen in the serious errors and omissions that occur. The second poem on the list is 'To His Noble Friend Mr. Richard Lovelace, upon his Poems'. Patterson comments:

this poem is often deployed to argue that Marvell was at this stage something of a Royalist himself. It is undeniable, however, that the poem sets writing and fighting against each other, and condemns 'our Civill Wars' for their abandonment of the peaceful, civic virtues. (p. 110)

The first query one might raise is as to why Patterson is so keen to suggest that this poem is not Royalist. It is published in a clearly Royalist context and, as we shall see in detail in Chapter 4, shares many concerns with the other prefatory poems which introduce Lovelace's *Lucasta*. The answer perhaps lies in Patterson's more general intention to recapture the 'Marvell revered by Grosart': a Royalist Marvell in 1648 or 1649 would spoil this political picture. Indeed, the language here ('it is undeniable') is somewhat browbeating: surely it is for Patterson's readers to decide whether this claim is 'undeniable', and, I would suggest, the logic is not entirely convincing. The fact that the poem sets writing and fighting against each other does not really define its politics one way or the other: in Royalist circles, of course, blame for the 'Civill Wars' was laid firmly at the door of Parliament, so this might just as well be a Royalist statement as one which—as Patterson loosely hints—questions Royalism.

Patterson goes on to list 'Tom May's Death'—a poem which is famously anti-Republican—amongst those of the 'Revolutionary period' but partly because of its anti-Republican sentiments she questions its attribution to Marvell. Given the stated aim at this point in Patterson's essay simply to list Marvell's poems, to undermine the authorship of a poem because of its political attitude is questionable. Although Patterson is not the first to suggest that 'Tom May's Death' is not by Marvell, her zeal is not matched when it comes to poems of doubtful attribution which are anti-monarchist.³⁰ Patterson's apparently neutral listing technique, then,

³⁰ Patterson devotes a section of her essay to the 'Dialogue Between two Horses', the authenticity of which has also been questioned, and the poem has been left out of some complete editions. See H.M.

seems to be one which is driven, and indeed skewed, by its own political assumptions. Understandably enough, Patterson also omits the Villiers elegy, a clearly Royalist poem with a scathing anti-Cromwellian argument, a poem which has long been under debate, but which the most recent scholarship firmly suggests was written by Marvell,³¹ and she argues that ‘An Horatian Ode’ is, ultimately, an unequivocally Cromwellian poem; this is a reading which I dispute at length in Chapter 6.

The most telling poem with regard to Patterson’s ‘revolutionary’ list, however, is ‘Upon the Death of Lord Hastings’. This is a poem which is certainly by Marvell and certainly written in the period which is designated as ‘revolutionary’, but is not listed at all. ‘Upon the Death of Lord Hastings’ is a poem published, like the poem to Lovelace, in a Royalist context,³² and so this omission proves convenient for Patterson’s overall argument that Marvell was ‘committed absolutely’ to the ‘Revolution’.³³ The combination of an extremely partial reading of Marvell’s poem to Lovelace, the omission of the two Royalist elegies (to Hastings and Villiers), a questioning of the authorship of ‘Tom May’s Death’, and a questionable reading of ‘An Horatian Ode’ as a purely Cromwellian poem, serves Patterson’s purpose of making Marvell’s early career as a poet seem politically consistent with his later writings. However, it is clear enough that in correcting what she sees as the previous

Margoliouth, Pierre Legouis, and E.E. Duncan Jones (eds), *The Poems and Letters of Andrew Marvell*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), II, p. 414. All quotations from Marvell’s poetry will be taken from this edition unless stated, and, despite the editorial complexity of this edition—in particular the addition, by Legouis, of signed notes which add to Margoliouth’s ones from the original edition of 1927—all citations from this edition will be given simply as Margoliouth I or Margoliouth II for the sake of clarity. Patterson fails to mention this particular attribution controversy, presumably, because the poem expresses the kinds of Republican sentiments which she is pleased to find in Marvell’s work.

³¹ Nigel Smith has evidence soon to be published in his Longman edition of Marvell that the Villiers elegy is, in fact, certainly by Marvell (private correspondence).

³² See Chapter 4 below. See also Michael Gearin-Tosh, ‘Marvell’s “Upon the Death of Lord Hastings”’ in *Essays and Studies* 34 (1981), pp. 105–122; and John McWilliams, “‘A Storm of Lamentations Writ’: *Lachrymae Musarum* and Royalist Culture After the Civil War’ in *Yearbook of English Studies* 33 (2003), pp. 273–289.

³³ Nicholas Guild in his article ‘The Contexts of Marvell’s Early “Royalist” Poems’ in *Studies in English Literature*, 20 (1980), pp. 125–136, makes a similarly revealing mistake in his attempt to prove that Marvell was not a Royalist. He describes Alexander Brome as a ‘convinced parliamentarian’ (p. 133) as part of an overall thesis that Marvell’s early poems ‘are not inconsistent with the assumption that he himself favoured Parliament’ (p.136). Brome was in fact the most staunch of Royalists, elegist to Charles I and other Royalist losses, and constant scourge of the Rump Parliament in the Interregnum (see, for example, ‘Arsy Versy’, and ‘Bumm Fodder’). He even wrote a poem in the voice of the imprisoned Charles which opens: ‘Imprison me ye *Traytors!* | Must I be Your fetter’d Slave, whilst you’r at liberty?’. This kind of mistake suggests that Guild was so keen to label Brome a ‘parliamentarian’ that he failed to check the facts about him.

critical bias towards a ‘Royalist’ Marvell, Patterson involves herself in a very similar kind of bias as that which she set out to correct. What emerges most strongly from Patterson’s article, then, is not any insight about Marvell, but an insight about what for Patterson herself would be ‘unpalatable’: the idea that Marvell may have, at some stage up to and including the early 1650s, been something of a Royalist. Martin Hollis aptly states that ‘the historian must read in before he can read out and there is a plain danger of his finding what he put there himself’,³⁴ and if Eliot and his followers put a civilised Royalism into their reading of Marvell, Patterson and others just as surely have ‘read in’ a Whig, proto-left wing predisposition.

Patterson is not the only critic of the ‘contextual revolution’ who makes such false moves: David Norbrook—someone who, like Patterson, has written extremely detailed and useful contextual work about Marvell—might be subject to similar kinds of questions. In *Writing the English Republic* (1999), he states that Marvell’s poems of the early 1650s ‘simply do not show consistency’.³⁵ Unlike Patterson, then, he is not simply attempting to make a coherent Marvell from disparate and/or false evidence. However, he also asserts that:

on the level of speech-acts, his poems [...] with great force [...] make incompatible utterances. Marvell proves to have something in common with a figure from whom idealizing pictures of his Olympian detachment have kept him far distant: the trimming Marchmont Nedham, who could tack between opposing sides with disconcerting dexterity. (p. 244)

To his credit, Norbrook’s Marvell is not a globally consistent writer, but is one who usually, within each individual poem, voices a definite and clear political position. Although this is more sophisticated than Annabel Patterson’s position, there are still some serious problems with the assumptions Norbrook makes regarding Marvell. The idea of ‘speech-acts’, though in some contexts a useful and apt method—for example in the classic example of Quentin Skinner analysing Machiavelli³⁶—is not entirely convincing in relation to Marvell. What kind of speech-act is ‘An Horatian Ode’, for example, given that it was not published and there is little evidence of it

³⁴ Martin Hollis, ‘Say it with flowers’ in James Tully (ed.), *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 135–146, p. 135.

³⁵ Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic*, p. 244.

³⁶ See James Tully, ‘The Pen is a Mighty Sword: Quentin Skinner’s Analysis of Politics’ in James Tully (ed.), *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 7–25.

even being circulated in manuscript form? A speech-act needs a speech-act community, and perhaps the fact that Norbrook does not investigate the origins of Skinner's thinking in the work of J.L. Austin—who himself, interestingly, claimed that his own speech-act theory could *not* be applied to literature—leaves his argument about Marvell here on very shaky conceptual ground.³⁷ Moreover, leaving this methodological problem aside, even if they are not strictly 'speech-acts', do Marvell's poems in the period Norbrook discusses always constitute forceful utterances? Is a good poem ever simply a single utterance? 'An Horatian Ode' is one of the most celebrated poetic examples of ambivalence and ambiguity, qualities which suggest that a text can be, effectively, several utterances at once. Norbrook's apparent subtlety of approach, then, masks the similarity of his assumptions to those of Patterson. We can deduce that poems must, in their view, be forceful, they must be committed, they must be political, and they must be effective. This kind of formulation is admirable enough on its own terms, and may be effective in analysing certain kinds of writing, but the work of Marvell invariably fails to fit this model. More worrying still, this model often has the effect of distorting and misrepresenting Marvell, and the chapters that follow give some specific examples of this problematic critical practice.

More generally, however, and given these problems with the contextual revolution, questions arise as to the future direction of Marvell studies. What methodologies might be adopted to cope with this complex and often difficult writer? How can one write about Marvell in the twenty-first century without beginning with the familiar protestation that until 'recently' Marvell has been misread as an apolitical poet? The answer lies in resisting a currently dominant critical tradition which assumes, often tacitly, a passive relationship between Marvell and the context in which he wrote. The first aim of this thesis, then, has probably been apparent in the ways in which the critical traditions have been described. I will seek to redress the imbalance of the current picture of Marvell, arguing that we must continue to think hard and carefully about his poetry *as poetry*, and that no apology is necessary for this, especially in a critical climate in which such study has become so marginalised. That is not to say that this thesis ignores context—in many cases I will

³⁷ J.L. Austin states that, for a speech-act to be a felicitous one, 'I must not be joking, for example, nor writing a poem', in *How to Do Things With Words* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), p. 9.

argue that certain important contextual aspects of particular works have been overlooked—but I do make the assumption that Marvell had agency, and the ability to think through and write about his own relations to his context, and that we can be more or less biased in our approach to his explorations. The kind of agency I am talking about here does not come from the Marvell with (to borrow a phrase from Graham Bradshaw) ‘laundry lists or prior intentions’, or even, to add a more Marvellian concern, of Parliamentary duties, but from Marvell ‘as the directing intelligence at work within the work’.³⁸ The majority of this thesis, then, offers detailed readings of poetic texts. This is not a work of history, it is a work of literary criticism, but where necessary, I register my disagreements (and agreements) with proponents of the contextual revolution in my reading of individual works.

This thesis has, however, another more important and defining aim, and one which springs from the detailed readings given in the following chapters. I argue that we need to rethink the way in which we imagine Marvell in either/or terms. The axis whereby the political Marvell is set against the literary Marvell has, to date, defined the majority of Marvell criticism: most articles and books addressing Marvell are, tacitly or overtly, either one or the other. Recent critics who are part of what I have called the contextual revolution complain (in some respects rightly) that New Criticism excluded the political Marvell but, in their zeal to correct this mistake, cause their own distortions by excluding or flattening the poetic Marvell. As we have seen, the political life of Marvell is marginalised in *Approaches to Marvell*, just as the fact of Marvell’s poetic excellence is marginalised in *Marvell and Liberty*. There seem to be two Marvells in the world, and they are all but entirely unrelated. Merely to attack the contextual revolution might be simply to replace one partial Marvell with another, and to risk a return to another old orthodoxy.

This issue is intimately linked to central questions: what is the relationship between different parts of Marvell’s work? And how, given this diversity of both output of, and response to, Marvell, might we attempt an overall assessment of his writing? Similar issues, of course, trouble the overall assessment of most writers, and indeed such questions might ultimately challenge the very idea of overall assessments. In a review of Annabel Patterson’s aforementioned book *Marvell and the Civic Crown*, however, Graham Bradshaw gives a confident, and seemingly

³⁸ Bradshaw, *Misrepresentations*, p. 31.

definitive, solution to this problem as it applies to Marvell. He takes issue with Patterson's assertion that, in the political work of Marvell, she finds 'exactly the same qualities of generic self-consciousness and inventiveness, the same deployments of old topoi in intelligent new configurations, which she [Rosalie Colie] had found in Marvell's "garden" lyrics'.³⁹ Bradshaw's response is powerful:

To insist upon the continuity between the great poems—those unique miracles of language—and a body of later writing that in many cases cannot even be assigned with any confidence to Marvell is odd and risky; the worst danger is that of devaluing the great poems, of failing to remember that great poetry offers more than "deployments of old topoi in intelligent configurations".⁴⁰

This is pertinent criticism of Patterson though it is not, of course, advice which has been widely heeded since 1980 when it was written. Bradshaw's argument serves, however, as a timely reminder to anyone attempting to 'unify' or 'integrate' the work of Marvell. Bradshaw goes on, in that review, to make his own kinds of distinctions between two different Marvells, the Marvell of the lyrics and the Marvell 'for his contemporaries':

When he wanted to write for his contemporary audience he produced rough, vigorous pentameters that remind us of Rochester or Oldham and sometimes look forward to the next century, to Pope or Charles Churchill. (p. 364)

He then, by way of illustration, quotes duly rough, vigorous pentameters from Marvell's elegy to Cromwell which he describes, aptly, as 'impressive, but coarse-fibred', going on to distinguish them clearly from 'the style of the private poems' which 'looks back, so that it is as if Marvell had a foot in each century'. Bradshaw continues:

Far from suggesting some kind of stylistic schizophrenia, the divergence between Marvell's private and public poems suggests an almost uncanny degree of self-knowledge [...] This suggests what is wrong with Patterson's claim that we need to 'integrate' the earlier and later writings. She argues that the later, political writing has 'much in common with his most admired poetry'; but this flies in the face of the internal evidence furnished by the contrast between Marvell's public and private modes, and of the external evidence furnished by the remarkable flux in Marvell's literary reputation. (p. 365)⁴¹

³⁹ Patterson, *Marvell and the Civic Crown*, p. 7.

⁴⁰ Graham Bradshaw, 'Speaking Well and Speaking True' in *Essays and Criticism* 30 (1980), pp. 357–367.

⁴¹ Stephen Zwicker agrees with this historical, and aesthetic, division of Marvell's career, stating that: 'Once we cross from lyric to satire we encounter a sensibility [...] utterly different', going on to argue that 'the distance between lyric and satire is not simply puzzling; it seems defeating' (p. 237), 'Lines

Bradshaw's main problem with *Marvell and the Civic Crown*, then, is not that that book fails correctly to characterise Marvell's politics, but that it fails to notice the difference between the very different modes of Marvell's writing. Although perhaps, as argued earlier, Patterson's book does not, finally, argue for a universally self-conscious Marvell (it argues, rather, for a universally *effective* writer), Bradshaw's point is a good one: it is important not to flatten Marvell's career into sameness; we must acknowledge the differences in tone, kind, and quality which divide Marvell's work. However, Bradshaw's own opposing model for Marvell's career raises more fundamental questions about how we do divide up Marvell's work. His main contention is that there are two Marvells, one politically effective, and one artistically pre-eminent. He links (albeit almost tacitly) the 'good stuff' to an early period of Marvell's career, and the politically impressive, but ultimately 'coarse', material to a 'later' time. Bradshaw's Marvell is comfortably divided into two recognisable periodic styles: one is early, reflexive and complex, and the other is late, coarse, and political. The early Marvell has his foot in an earlier century (though one wonders whether Bradshaw means the sixteenth or the seventeenth century here), and Marvell later places his other foot firmly in the eighteenth century, thus looking forward to Pope and Churchill. The division between the two Marvells which has characterised critical responses is, according to Bradshaw, entirely appropriate, and although the Bradshaw of this review might disapprove of the more general turn to politics which has occurred since that review was written, he would not, we might assume, dispute the basic twofold division of Marvell which the contextual revolution has effectively endorsed. The twofold model proposed by Bradshaw would seem to argue that the contextual revolution has got the wrong Marvell, but it still maintains that there are two Marvells, and that the political model, at least, captures one of them—the political Marvell—correctly.

There are, however, some factual and conceptual problems with this position. First, as we have already seen, it is not at all clear that the early/late distinction that Bradshaw makes is tenable: Marvell may well have written lyric poetry late into his life and, conversely, he possibly started writing 'coarse' satire as early as the 1640s,

of Authority: Politics and Literary Culture in the Restoration' in Kevin Sharpe and Stephen Zwicker (eds), *Politics of Discourse: The Literature and History of Seventeenth-Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 230–270.

when his poem to Richard Flecknoe may have been written. Behind Bradshaw's chronological distinction, it would seem, lie some questionable assumptions about the relation between art and life: Marvell's writing, it is assumed, is complex and delicate when his life gave him leisure for that delicacy, and coarse and political when he was engaged in the grubby world of politics. Secondly, Marvell's poetic style is not so easily divisible into 'ringing pentameters' of public poetry, and the reflexive, complex style of private poetry. Some of Marvell's most complex and difficult poetry was published—such as his poems to Milton and Lovelace, and the Hastings elegy—and some very 'ringing' lines may not have been made public, for example his elegy to Cromwell. Also, it is not certain that the poems which Bradshaw describes as 'private' were as private as all that: it is possible that these poems were circulated more or less widely in manuscript and that the manuscripts have not survived, or even, perhaps, that these poems were published and subsequently lost. Certain evidence is not as forthcoming on this matter as Bradshaw would like it to be. And, of course, much of Marvell's output is neither quite one kind of poetry nor the other, and either contains elements of both kinds of writing, or attempts and achieves things that fit into neither category particularly well.

Bradshaw's judgement of what is and what is not *artistically* successful and interesting does not have to be called into question in order to make such observations; on the contrary, his judgements are powerful and, I would suggest, felicitous. But the clear and bipolar distinctions Bradshaw goes on to make on the back of such literary judgements are not tenable. Where would Bradshaw's model place, for example, those moments at which Marvell writes about writing but is not, as such, artistically successful? Where would this model place Marvell's poems to Milton, Lovelace, and Hastings, which are interesting, literary poems, but poems which Marvell published? Where, in this model which damns 'The First Anniversary' as artistically uninteresting, do the passages in that poem which powerfully depict the struggles of the poet writing about Cromwell fit? Similarly, where do we place those passages of *The Rehearsal Transpros'd* and *Mr. Smirke* that tackle, sceptically and interestingly, the difficult issue of writing about politics? These things do not seem to fit into either of Bradshaw's neat categories and, I would suggest, fundamentally challenge what he (and others) effect when making such categorisations. In a recent and important book on poetic form, Peter McDonald

attempts to distinguish between two kinds of poetry: one that ‘wants approval [...] and wants to get the weight of consensus behind its efforts’; and another that ‘knows too much to play by these rules’ and so ‘puts up with the finally uncontrollable difficulty and complexity of language; it knows that words, not “personality”, are what survive or perish’.⁴² McDonald continues, though, with a note of caution against settling too easily with one or other of these judgements:

The critical task of telling one kind of poetry from another is never simple, and can never be performed with completeness; indeed, it is probably misleading to suggest that poets necessarily conform entirely to one or the other of these patterns, for many careers mix both kinds of ambition, and both kinds of achieved writing. (pp. 14–15)

This warning against the idea of ‘completeness’ of poetic categorisation is one which speaks importantly to these kinds of efforts in Marvell studies. The kinds of categories by which Bradshaw and others carve up Marvell’s career assume a too easy critical supremacy over Marvell’s output, and presume therefore, as it were, to tell Marvell texts what they think about the act of writing. The best lyrics, Bradshaw insists, are interested in art, writing, and its difficulties, whilst the other kind are only interested in doing things in the public, political world. Bradshaw seems to assume that we can easily tell these two things apart. So although this twofold model suggests a Marvell whom Bradshaw declares, approvingly, to be in possession of ‘an almost uncanny degree of self-knowledge’,⁴³ this Marvell is told, by dictat, when he is being self-conscious, and what it is he is self-conscious about: sometimes it is his own lyric, reflexive brilliance, sometimes it is, by contrast, his own coarse, impressive, political effectiveness. The task is achieved, to put this in McDonald’s terms, with a suspicious simplicity and ‘completeness’.

The way out of this critical impasse which I propose is to explore the ways in which Marvell himself, insofar as this is ascertainable from his writings, thought about the act of writing, and its relationships to its various, often political, contexts. This thesis looks at the Marvell behind a series of related but differing explorations of the act of writing, which are also, often, explorations of the relation of writing to context: the Marvell who, when engaged in paper wars in the Restoration, seemed to

⁴² Peter McDonald, *Serious Poetry: Form and Authority from Yeats to Hill* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), p. 14.

⁴³ Bradshaw, ‘Speaking Well and Speaking True’, p. 365.

be as hostile about his own writing as that of his opponents; the Marvell who, when he wrote about the death of Henry Hastings in 1649, questioned the possibility of writing elegy after the Civil War; the Marvell who wrote a 'Horatian' Ode to Oliver Cromwell, but made a young writer, a 'forward Youth', the subject of his poem; the Marvell who summoned the ghost of Ben Jonson to evict Tom May from the pantheon of great poets, and in doing so evoked the still more spectral figure of Shakespeare; the Marvell who, in writing a country house poem embroiled in the Civil War, destabilised the country house genre itself; the Marvell who, in praising Milton, launched a scathing attack on his own rhymed verse; the Marvell who questioned his own right to write against Samuel Parker as much as he questioned Parker's writing itself. This is a Marvell who crosses the divide between the political and the lyric, and can be seen in the full chronological and generic range of his work. That is not to say that this Marvell is the same throughout his career, or that he always says the same thing about writing—or, even, that all his work is of equal aesthetic or political value—on the contrary, he comes to very different conclusions on different occasions, and even within individual works, and is sometimes confusing and even confused. Some of his works were more politically effective than others, and some are more successful in artistic terms. However, there is, I shall argue, a *family resemblance* between these explorations of writing which crosses political, historical and generic divides. What emerges from this exploration of Marvell's own explorations is a single Marvell—not a politically consistent figure, or someone who consistently believed in the same things, or even a writer who always imagines the same role for his writing—but a figure who is singular in his rigorously questioning preoccupation with the act of writing itself. I hope to allow the two unrelated Marvells (for which Bradshaw and others argue), then, to become if not identical (*pace* Patterson), then at least part of the same family.

The range of Marvell's work which will be covered here is wide: in the course of this thesis lyric poetry, occasional verse, satire in verse and prose, and letters are all given consideration. This is an attempt, therefore, to provide a model for Marvell's writing which holds good for the range of his output as a writer. That is not to say, of course, that there are not imbalances in the kinds of works which are considered, and in the case of this thesis, such inevitable imbalances are determined in two main ways. First, this thesis looks in most detail at Marvell's writings that

most explicitly, directly and compellingly, concern the act of writing. It is all too easy to state that writing (or any art, for that matter) is self-conscious, and so the texts which this thesis tackles at length are self-conscious in ways beyond what might be typically expected of great writing: the Lovelace poem is specifically about the poetry of Lovelace, and the state of England's writing; the poem to Milton is about *Paradise Lost* and the shadow it casts over other poetry; the Hastings elegy, I shall argue, makes writing elegy its subject; and 'An Horatian Ode' begins with a 'forward Youth' poet figure against whose dilemma the rest of the poem is set. These lengthy considerations follow on from a wider consideration of Marvell's work which examines how and why Marvell so persistently and challengingly wrote about writing itself. Secondly, this canon is determined by the need to respond, at the particular critical moment described above, to notions about Marvell which are as questionable as they are institutionally entrenched. For this reason, writing which, in a broad sense, concerns politics dominates here, and lyric poetry—the poetry which has rightly been identified as one of Marvell's most lasting and impressive achievements—is relatively under-represented. It is not without regret that this should be the case, but to counteract a political tradition by presenting an alternative, lyric Marvell would, for reasons I have already outlined, be ineffective and under immediate suspicion of falling back into old habits concerning this writer.

The thesis unfolds as follows. Chapter 2 offers a survey of Marvell's writings about writing, covering a broad range, both chronologically and generically, encompassing lyric and occasional poetry, letters, prose works, and verse satire. This chapter will establish, then, both that writing itself was a central preoccupation for Marvell throughout his career, and also that there is a certain degree of consistency in this preoccupation, that consistency lying in Marvell's questioning, anxious, and, above all, exploratory approach. Chapter 3 looks at Marvell in relation to the most defining event of his era—the English Civil War—and examines the ways in which Marvell conceives of the role of writing in relation to that bitter internal war. Chapter 4 looks in detail at two defining poems published in Royalist contexts at the end of the Civil War, 'Upon the Death of Lord Hastings' and 'To His Noble Friend Mr. Richard Lovelace, upon his Poems', and ponders what Marvell saw as the role of publication in the face of cultural devastation. Chapter 5 examines Marvell's most important literary relationship, that with John Milton, and gives a close reading of

Marvell's poem to Milton, 'On *Paradise Lost*', arguing that the echoes in that poem of *Paradise Lost* itself, which critics have as yet failed to notice, deepen Marvell's anxiety about Milton's, and in turn his own, writing; and Chapter 6, the concluding chapter, looks closely at 'An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return From Ireland', in particular its proposals for, and problems with, various models for writing about Cromwell and the Regicide. The relation of the final four chapters to the arguments given in Chapter 2 will, I hope, enforce the idea of family resemblance among Marvell's writings, as the poems I have chosen to write about at greater length (particularly in Chapters 3, 4 and 5) are, I would suggest, in some cases different in their degree of artistic success, but not in kind, from the works I discuss more summarily in Chapter 2. The thesis ends, then, with the much neglected figure of the 'forward Youth' in 'An Horatian Ode', and argues that this troubled, reluctant *writer*—a figure who seemingly haunted Marvell throughout his life—should be at the centre of our thinking about Marvell and his troubled, reluctant acts of writing.

Chapter 2

‘Those that take upon themselves to be Writers’: Marvell, Writers, and Writing

1. Marvell, Art, and Writing

A glance at a list of the titles of his writings suggests the extent to which art—in its broadest sense of human intervention in the natural world—was a recurrent concern for Marvell.¹ There are, for a start, a large number of poems which directly mention writing, a writer, or literary form. These include: ‘To his Noble Friend Mr. Richard Lovelace, upon his Poems’, ‘To a Gentleman that only upon the sight of the Author’s writing, had given a Character of his Person and Judgement of his Fortune’, ‘Upon an Eunuch; a Poet’, ‘In the French Translation of Lucan’, ‘Epigramma in Duos montes Amosclivum Et Bilboream’, ‘An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell’s Return From Ireland’, ‘To his worthy Friend Doctor Witty upon his Translation of the Popular Errors’, ‘A Letter to Doctor Ingelo’, ‘A Poem upon the Death of O.C.’, ‘On *Paradise Lost*’, and ‘A Ballad call’d the Chequer Inn’. There are also several poems which call themselves epitaphs, three poems named as ‘dialogues’, and a famous ‘complaint’ for the death of a beloved pet. In addition, two major prose works have titles which set them in relation to literary works: *The Rehearsal Transpros’d* alludes to Buckingham’s play *The Rehearsal*, and *Mr. Smirke: Or, the Divine in Mode* recalls Etherege’s play *The Man of Mode*.

Several poems have titles that make reference to the art of music, including: ‘The Fair Singer’, ‘Musicks Empire’, ‘Two Songs at the Marriage of Lord Fauconberg and the Lady Mary Cromwell’. Another set of poems have titles that refer to themselves in ways which suggest a high degree of artistic self-consciousness: the ‘painter’ poems not only purport to give advice to an artist, but they name their own status, as ‘Instructions’ or ‘Advice’; ‘The *Definition* of Love’ (my italics) suggests a poem which is as much about itself as about its ostensible subject; ‘The *Picture* of little T.C. in a Prospect of Flowers’ again names itself as a *made* artifact, as does ‘The Coronet’; and ‘The Gallery’ leads us to expect a poem

¹ In many cases it is not entirely certain that the titles given to the poems are Marvell’s own. However, it is possible, even likely, that the titles are by Marvell and, as I will hope to show, they are fitting for his writerly output.

about several works of visual art. A further set of titles proclaim the subject of their respective poems to be other kinds of artful intervention in nature: 'The Statue at Charing Cross' and 'The Statue in Stocks-Market' address the art of sculpture; 'Ametas and Thestylis making Hay-Ropes' describes a rustic art; the Mower poems suggest a less artful intervention in nature, but an intervention nonetheless, and 'The Garden' and 'Upon Appleton House' suggest the artful contributions of gardener and architect. That this list covers such a large part of Marvell's output as a writer should alert us to just how artistically self-conscious Marvell must have been.

Moreover, the body of Marvell's texts—prose works, lyric poems, verse satires and letters—furnish further evidence that for Marvell, art, and in particular the art of writing, was more than just a medium in which he worked; it seems, rather, that writing was itself a matter for considerable concern and attention. This concern is suggested not only by the most complex and self-reflexive of Marvell's poetry—or what would traditionally be described as that which has the most literary worth—but in fragments, occasional pieces of writing and in verse and prose satire. What critics such as Rosalie Colie and others have found in Marvell's most outstanding lyric poetry—what Colie aptly titles Marvell's 'poetry of criticism'—might be seen, albeit in a diluted, less artistically successful form, in a large proportion of Marvell's work, and a few illustrative examples follow.

In 'Upon an Eunuch; a Poet', a fragment of Latin verse, Marvell paints an ambivalent picture of a writer of poetry:

Nec sterilem te crede; licet, multeribus exul,
Falcem virginiae nequeas immitere messi,
Et nostro peccare modo. Tibi Fama perennè
Prægnabit; rapiesque novem de monte Sorores;
Et pariet modulos Echo repetita Nepotes.

[Don't believe yourself sterile, although an exile from women,
You cannot thrust a sickle at the virgin harvest,
And sin in our fashion. Fame will be continually pregnant by you,
And you will snatch the Nine Sisters from the mountain;
Echo too, often struck, will bring forth musical offspring.]²

The main argument of the poem is a standard assertion of the power of the written word to endure and make a writer famous. More than this, it implies that poetry is a

² Translation by William A. McQueen and Kiffin A. Rockwell, *The Latin Poetry of Andrew Marvell* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964), p. 43. I quote the poem in its entirety.

particularly powerful medium, its tuneful and echoing nature meaning that it will actually be loved and embraced, not just well known. We might initially think, then, that if this poem expresses writerly self-consciousness, it is a self-consciousness tending towards confidence rather than self-question. However, there is a strong counter-current running in the poem that begins with the title. If this poem describes a eunuch-poet then the powers of poetry which it extols are framed as a consolation prize, rather than as absolute virtues. Indeed, the poet is characterised by his exclusion from society through his inability to 'sin in our fashion'.³ Moreover, the words which are translated as 'snatch' (line 4) and 'struck' (line 5) have connotations which may indicate sexual assault.⁴ The violence of this image therefore runs counter to the harmonious idea of 'musical offspring', suggesting that these offspring might be the product of forced, rather than loving, sexual encounters. The poem as a whole, then, is ambivalent, and serves both to assert and to deny the possibility of a positive role for writing; it acts both as a critique of poetic writers, and as an affirmation of the exciting possibility of becoming immortal through writing.

Marvell also addresses writing in an epistolary poem in Latin that he wrote to Joseph Maniban 'as a skeptic's challenge'.⁵ Maniban was an abbot who was famous for his ability to read character from handwriting:

Quis posthac chartæ committat sensa loquaci,
Si sua crediderit Fata subesse stylo?
Conscia si prodat Scribentis Litera sortem,
Quicquid & in vita plus latuisse velit?
(lines 1–4)

[Who after this would commit his thoughts to babbling paper,
If he thought that his fate would be exposed by his pen?
And if the guilty handwriting might proclaim the fortune of the writer,
What thing in life would he more wish to have hidden?]⁶

³ Lynn Enterline, in *The Tears of Narcissus: Melancholia and Masculinity in Early Modern Writing* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996) proposes a similarly double-edged reading of this poem from a different, psychoanalytic perspective, concluding that Marvell's 'version of accession to poetic (pastoral) language offers little more compensation than does Lacan's version of accession to language *per se*, for the sense of writing poetry as merely sinning in a new way and Marvell's final line qualify any lingering sense of linguistic triumph' (p. 154). I concur, broadly, but doubt that 'merely' sinning is an adequate description of the final lines.

⁴ See Enterline, note on p. 43.

⁵ George deF. Lord (ed.), *Andrew Marvell: The Complete Poems* (London: Everyman, 1984), p. 252. McQueen and Rockwell concur, suggesting that Marvell was 'in the position of a sceptic willing to applaud a clever stunt' (p. 29). This poem is dated 1676 in Margoliouth I, p. 272.

⁶ I use the Latin translation of this poem by McQueen and Rockwell, *The Latin Poetry of Andrew Marvell*, pp. 31–32.

Marvell presents Maniban's claimed ability to read a writer's fate through his handwriting as a source of anxiety for writers—as something that might stop them writing altogether—although we might also suspect a certain scepticism on Marvell's part about Maniban's claim. This doubt is underlined as Marvell continues to an apparent hostile critique of Maniban:

Nil præter solitum sapiebat Epistola nostra,
Exemplumque meæ Simplicitatis erat [...]
Hic tamen interpres quo non securior alter,
(Non res, non voces, non ego notus ei)
Rimatur fibres notularum cautus Aruspex,
Scripturæque inhians consulit exta meæ.
Inde statim vitæ casus, animique recessus
Explicat; (haud Genio plura liquere putem.)
(lines 9–10, 13–18)

[My letter savored of nothing beyond the ordinary,
And was a sample of my simplicity [...]
Yet this interpreter, than whom no other is surer,
(Neither the subject matter, the words, nor I known to him)
A cunning haruspex, examines the entrails of my writing
And, poring, consults the inwards of my script.
Then immediately the events of my life, the recesses of my mind
He unfolds. (I doubt that more things are apparent to my guardian spirit.)]

Marvell's approach is sardonic, and he appears to mock the idea that writing can be hugely revealing; this is suggested by the great, even absurd, distance between the simplicity, and lack of consequence, in the particular act of writing described, and the far-reaching predictions which are made on the basis of this writing. Yet there is also a distinct sense of unease in the image of writing being like the entrails of the writer; indeed, this might chime with sentiments in Marvell's poem to Flecknoe in which writing is figured as disgusting self-revelation. In fact, the Maniban poem takes this image further, and imagines the reader and interpreter as murderous, killing and disembowelling the writer through their acts of interpretation. Marvell is at once mocking of, and anxious about, the possibility that writing might be more revealing than a writer can ever know, and perhaps this ambivalence is why he took this rather peculiar literary subject for one of his poems.

In these two examples Marvell opted to write poems which were directly addressed to the issue of writing, but he also had a habit of writing about writing even when exploring issues not obviously related to that subject. When writing

oppositional satire, for example, it might be assumed that the medium itself, rather than being highlighted, would disappear under the pressure of the satiric purpose; but for Marvell this kind of writing sometimes centred on writing itself. In 'The Loyall Scot', for example, Marvell uses a dead poet to do his political work, and in doing so becomes entangled in very writerly, literary issues:

Of the old Heroes when the Warlike shades
Saw Douglas Marching on the Elisian Glades,
They streight Consulting gather'd in a Ring
Which of their Poets shold his Welcome sing,
And (as a favourable Pennance) Chose
Cleveland on whom they would the Task Impose.
Hee Understood and Willingly Addrest
His ready muse to Court the Warlike Guest.
Much had hee Cur'd the Humor of his vein:
Hee Judg'd more Clearly now and saw more plain.
For those soft Airs had temper'd every thought,
And of wise Lethe hee had took a draught.
Abruptly he began disguising art,
As of his Satyr this had been a part.
(lines 1–14)

The poet is the Royalist satirist Cleveland, who had written 'The Rebel Scot' in 1644 after Scotland's rebellion and its subsequent fighting for Parliament in the Civil War. This issue was again to the fore in the late 1660s, as Parliament (of which Marvell was, of course, a part) was once more discussing the relations between the nations.⁷ Marvell hoped to promote the union by praising the heroics of a Scottish naval Captain who defended an English ship during the Dutch war in 1667. In a witty twist, therefore, he has Cleveland turn his coat and become a political ally, having drunk in the waters of Lethe, and thus forgotten his past anti-Scottish politics. Indeed, Marvell's image of the ease of this transformation is striking ('Abruptly he began disguising art'), as if all art is 'disguising' and therefore open to use for opposing political sides. The word 'disguising' however, might give us pause, partly because it is somewhat reminiscent of a phrase Marvell uses in a hostile context in the poem 'Mourning'. In that poem, Marvell questions the veracity of a young woman's mourning for her dead lover, wondering if her tears are genuine or not. At one point, he voices the most extreme criticism that might be made:

⁷ See Diana Trevino Benet, "'The Loyall Scot' and the Hidden Narcissus' in Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (eds), *On the Celebrated and Neglected Poems of Andrew Marvell* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1992), pp. 192–206.

Yet some affirm, pretending Art,
Her Eyes have so her Bosome drown'd,
Only to soften near her Heart
A place to fix another Wound.
(lines 13–16)

The phrase 'pretending Art' is at the heart of the kinds of questions about artfulness versus 'natural' emotion that the poem as a whole raises. Marvell seems to argue that 'Chlora' employs a kind of art by which she pretends to be in mourning when this is not really the case. 'Art', then, comes under attack, and becomes at this point almost synonymous with pretence, illusion, and deceit; it is interesting to note how, in a poem ostensibly about the 'natural' emotion of mourning which is suggested by the title, Marvell becomes involved in questions of artfulness versus reality, and in attacking the role of art. We might link these ideas to 'The Loyall Scot', in which Marvell has Cleveland using a disguising art, or an art which disguises his true intentions or allegiances. Nevertheless, this sits rather oddly with the assertion that Cleveland has already forgotten his old allegiances and is 'Willingly' (line 7) going to eulogise Douglas. Is Cleveland being portrayed as a turncoat—one who is disloyal and thus able to switch allegiances—or is he a deceiver who can write with apparent, though disingenuous, passion for a cause in which he does not believe? This is a knotty problem—and perhaps is an inevitable result of Marvell's extraordinary poetic misappropriation—but by the end of the poem, Marvell is more confidently and audaciously re-writing poetic history, by having Cleveland utter the following apology to Douglas:

Pardon, Young Heroe, this soe long Transport;
Thy death more noble did the same Extort.
My former satyr for this verse forget,
The hare's head 'gainst the goose giblets sett.
I single did against a Nation write,
Against a Nation thou didst singly fight.
My differing Crime doth more thy vertue raise
And such my Rashness best thy valour praise.
(lines 274–281)

This is an extraordinary literary, as well as political move. Not only does Marvell re-write history to make Cleveland a voice in the wilderness rather than a part of a strong Royalist political grouping—a group of which Cleveland was in fact a part, and which included Marvell himself for a time—it forces Cleveland to apologise for

his previous attack on Scotland. This poem works, then, as a piece of cleverly conceived propaganda, but also as an daring re-writing of literary history. This is especially interesting in the light of Cleveland's own poem ('The Rebel Scot') and its invocations to his muse to whip-up his own anti-Scottish sentiments:

Come keen Iambicks, with your Badgers feet,
And Badger-like, bite till your teeth do meet.
Help ye tart Satyrists, to imp my rage,
With all the Scorpions that should whip the age.
Scots are like Witches; do but whet your pen,
Scratch til the blood come; they'l not hurt you then.
(lines 27–32)⁸

Cleveland's stance here—Royalist, venomously anti-Scottish, and strident—is turned on its head in Marvell's poem, where he is contrite, amenable and willing to eulogise a Scot. The difference between the real Cleveland and Marvell's Cleveland underlines just how audacious Marvell's re-writing is here. We might even say that writing, or literary politics, is as much Marvell's concern in 'The Loyall Scot' as the political situation that is its ostensible subject. Here, as elsewhere, Marvell seems to write about writing, even as he ostensibly writes about something else, and this is a pattern for which the rest of this chapter—and indeed the rest of this thesis—will furnish further evidence.

What these diverse examples already press us to ask is how Marvell more generally conceived of the medium in which he operated, and whether there are any generalisations that might be made. These instances (coupled with the evidence of his artful, writerly titles) suggest, certainly, that Marvell made writing his subject far more than one might expect. They also suggest that writerly self-consciousness is not simply something achieved by Marvell once in a while, in the most successful of his poems—it is not, in other words, only a mark of artistic achievement—but is something, often difficult and problematic, with which Marvell perennially struggled. It might be argued, furthermore, that at moments at which Marvell takes the art of writing as his subject he most directly challenges the kinds of clear categorisations—whether Bradshavian and art-centred or politically driven—which have characterised so much criticism of his work. If critics have argued and theorised over how we

⁸ Quoted from Brian Morris and Eleanor Withington (eds), *The Poems of John Cleveland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967).

might view and categorise Marvell's writing, then it might be timely—given what we have already seen of his own interest in these questions—to explore in more detail how Marvell *himself* thought about his own medium.

2. Marvell Against Writing

On two notable occasions—in his poems 'Tom May's Death' and 'Fleckno, an English Priest at Rome'—Marvell's fire turns on individual writers whom he attacks and debases; these are writers who are presented as especially worthy of censure. It is worth examining in detail the complex savagery of these two poems, and to ask whether Marvell allows the possibility of a positive role for writing in the face of such virulent attacks. During his years of self-imposed exile (in 1645 or 1646) Marvell had the encounter that inspired 'Fleckno, an English Priest at Rome', and it is possible, therefore, but by no means certain, that the poem was written around this time.⁹ What is immediately notable about this poem, especially in the light of the contextual revolution described in Chapter 1, is the absence of any mention of the political situation in England at the time: whether the poem was written as Civil War raged in England, or whether it is just set at that tumultuous time in English national history, this context is notable by its absence. In fact, the poem is based exclusively on a specific meeting between Marvell and Richard Flecknoe—a Roman Catholic priest and poet—and the poem represents an extraordinary and scathing attack by Marvell on Flecknoe's bad poetry.

The poem recounts a visit paid to Flecknoe, out of a sense of duty: Marvell's poetic speaker is 'oblig'd by frequent visits of this man' (line 1) and so 'sought his Lodging' (line 5). The location of Flecknoe's rooms are 'at the Sign | Of the sad *Pelican*; Subject divine | For Poetry' (lines 5–6), which is deliberately ironic because it quickly emerges that Flecknoe's poetry is anything but divine. In fact, the moment Marvell's poetic speaker enters Flecknoe's room, he is subject to a barrage of dreadful verse:

Straight without further information,
In hideous verse, he, and a dismal tone,

⁹ Margoliouth states that the 'incidents, but not necessarily the composition, of this satire belong to the spring of 1645 or 1646', Margoliouth I, p. 293.

Begins to exercise, as if I were
Possesst; and sure the *Devil* brought me there.
(lines 19–22)¹⁰

This bombardment continues, such that Marvell's speaker describes his situation as a 'Martyrdom' (line 26):

Only this frail Ambition did remain,
The last distemper of the sober Brain,
That there had been some present to assure
The future Ages how I did indure:
And how I, silent, turn'd my burning Ear
Towards the Verse; and when that could not hear,
Held him the other; and unchanged yet,
Ask'd still for more.
(lines 27–34)

Marvell's speaker takes this martyrdom seriously enough to 'ask for more' of Flecknoe's poetry, as if with a (rather perverse) eye to posterity. Indeed, Marvell here may echo a poet whose reputation was already secure: in describing 'the last distemper of the sober Brain', Marvell recalls Milton's 'Lycidas', in which 'Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise | (That last infirmity of noble mind)'.¹¹ However, this echo does not work in the way one might expect; Marvell is not building on a past poetic achievement, he is using it *against* Flecknoe. If Marvell does imagine a positive role for poetic tradition as represented by Milton, what that tradition has achieved serves here to undermine, rather than encourage attempts to write poetry. Marvell echoes Milton here only to show how far from these writers Flecknoe is, and thus literary tradition cautions against, rather than promotes future literary activity.

Soon afterwards, an entirely more mundane, even disgusting, use is imagined for writing, as the impoverished Flecknoe uses his own manuscripts for clothing:

He therefore circumscribes himself in rimes;
And swaddled in's own papers seaven times,
Wears a close Jacket of poetick Buff
With which he doth his third Dimension Stuff.
(lines 69–72)

¹⁰ 'Exercise' is a contemporary spelling of 'exorcise' (see Margoliouth I, p. 293).

¹¹ 'Lycidas' lines 70–71, quoted from John Carey (ed.), *John Milton: The Minor Poems and Samson Agonistes* (London: Longman, 1968). See Margoliouth I, p. 293 for a note on this echo.

This fact is picked up later in the poem when, after they have eaten dinner, Flecknoe undresses in order to read more poetry:

Of all his Poems there he stands ungirt
Save only two foul copies for his shirt:
Yet these he promises as soon as clean.
But how I loath'd to see my Neighbour glean
Those papers, which he pilled from within
Like white fleaks rising from a Leaper's skin!
(lines 129–134)

The idea of writing as leprosy takes the satire to a new, and distasteful, level. The startling unlocking of the dormant meaning of the commonplace metaphorical phrase 'foul papers', a term, of course, for handwritten text, makes all writing potentially disgusting and distasteful. Flecknoe's literal wearing of his poetry moves from being indicative of his poverty, and an amusing use of his otherwise useless verse, to become associated with distasteful self-revelation, and a diseased consciousness. Such is the poetic speaker's excess here and elsewhere in the poem, that one critic has suggested that this speaker is as much Marvell's target of attack here as is Flecknoe himself:

Never connecting with anything beyond the chance to affirm his own superior station, he [Marvell's poetic narrator] joins the ranks of 'barbed Censurers' condemned in the poem to Lovelace [...] His presentation manifests a subtle vision of wit's insidious capacity to work against itself.¹²

If there were any truth in this argument—and the internal evidence of the poem's extremity would suggest that there is—it enforces the idea that Marvell is genuinely exploring, rather than simply dismissing, writing. Suspicious of both Flecknoe's bad writing as well as his own speaker's tasteless attacks on that writing, Marvell leaves his reader thinking. This kind of exploration puts Marvell's own poem in something of a strange position, being both an attack on Flecknoe, and, perhaps, an implicit attack on itself; it somehow fails to settle on a singular position which is easy to assimilate.

More complex in its portrayal of a poetic villain, however, is 'Tom May's Death', a poem Marvell wrote several years later, probably in 1650. Aubrey said, in what is the first known published comment on the poem, that 'Mr. Marvel in his

¹² Christopher Martin, 'Flecknoe's Cabinet and Marvell's Cankered Muse' in *Essays in Criticism* 40 (1990), pp. 54–66.

poems upon Tom May's death falls very severe upon him',¹³ and it has often been overlooked just how tasteless and vicious a poem 'Tom May's Death' really is: Marvell hounds a recently dead May through the afterlife, gleefully imagining his humiliation by Ben Jonson, before seeing him die a second death, disappearing into a 'Cloud of pitch' (line 99). The opening of the poem sets this hostile and mocking tone by making May's death and subsequent confusion in the afterlife darkly comic:

As one put drunk into the Packet-boat,
Tom May was hurry'd hence and did not know't.
 But was amaz'd on the Elysian side,
 And with an Eye uncertain, gazing wide,
 Could not determine in what place he was,
 For whence in Stevens ally Trees or Grass?
 Nor where the Popes head, not the Mitre lay,
 Signs by which still he found and lost his way.
 At last while doubtfully he all compares,
 He saw near hand, as he imagin'd *Ares*.
 (lines 1–10)

For a horribly funny moment, May does not know whether he is alive or dead, and his confusion over his whereabouts is damningly evoked by his failed attempts to locate himself by means of Pub signs. Drunkenness did, in fact, have an intimate connection with May's death—Aubrey describes May's 'death after drinking' by suffocation (p. 269)—and Marvell, rather tastelessly, seems to refer to this when he gleefully describes May's premature demise. Just as May thinks he has found his bearings, and recognised the familiar innkeeper *Ares*,¹⁴ the joke turns on May again, as it emerges that this figure is in fact Ben Jonson, who proceeds to launch a sustained tirade against May. Like another elegy written by Marvell in this period, 'Upon the Death of Lord Hastings', 'Tom May's Death' might, surprisingly, fit Jahan Ramazani's definition of the 'modern' elegy:

Modern elegists turn their rage outwards, attacking and debasing the Dead [...] they slacken its [elegy's] traditional ties with love poetry and encomium. Earlier elegists like Milton and Shelley, though they may have scourged nymphs, clerics, and reviewers, honoured the dead without reservation.¹⁵

¹³ *Aubrey's Brief Lives*, p. 269.

¹⁴ See Margoliouth I, p. 95.

¹⁵ Jahan Ramazani, *Poetry of Mourning: The Modern Elegy from Hardy to Heaney* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 5. See Chapter 4 for an account of 'Upon the Death of Lord Hastings' and the aptness of the tag 'modern' for that poem.

Marvell's work can be seen to challenge Ramazani's historical situation of 'modern' aspects of elegy in the twentieth century: 'Tom May's Death' is a poem of considerable rage, and it attacks and debases the dead Thomas May, just as Ramazani's modern elegists angrily attack their subjects. This is interesting here as it underlines the extent to which Marvell's explorations of writing could be scathingly critical, and so prophetic of a future poetic tradition in which writing undermines itself in thoroughgoing ways.

This hostile and aggressive nature of 'Tom May's Death' might partly explain why the poem has had perhaps the most problematic critical history of all Marvell's poems; this is, certainly, one of the most uncomfortable poems Marvell wrote. Marvell's satirical venom does not sit easily with either of the views of Marvell which have held sway over the last hundred years. For critics and readers who held Marvell as the 'laureate of grass, and of greenery',¹⁶ or in T.S. Eliot's words, the poet of 'equipoise [...] balance and proportion of tones',¹⁷ the poem is far too vicious, hostile, and *unbalanced*; it is a poem to be elided and ignored rather than one to dwell on. For proponents of the contextual revolution, on the other hand, the harsh tone might be acceptable, but the politics are not: May's main crime, in Marvell's eyes, is his turn away from Royalism to become the 'Chronicler to *Spartacus*' (line 74) and hence a defender of those Parliamentarians who, like Spartacus himself—the most famous Roman slave rebel who, in 73 BC, began a staggeringly successful revolt that shook Rome—rebelled and toppled the monarchy of England.¹⁸ Written soon after 'An Horatian Ode', this apparent political Royalism is hard for most proponents of the contextual revolution to take; they typically argue, after all, that Marvell's 'brush' with Royalism ended firmly with the Ode to Cromwell in the summer of 1650.

The most common solution to this 'problem' has been largely to ignore the poem, and it has not received as much critical attention as many other Marvell poems.¹⁹ Some have sought to solve the problem by arguing (in a familiar move) that

¹⁶ H.C. Beeching on Marvell reprinted in Donno (ed.), *The Critical Heritage*, p. 291.

¹⁷ 'Andrew Marvell', p. 75.

¹⁸ See Keith R. Bradley, *Slavery and Rebellion in the Roman World, 140 B.C.—70 B.C.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), especially Chapter 5, for an account of Spartacus's rebellion. See Margoliouth I, p. 306 for May's turn to Parliament.

¹⁹ Significant silences, or near silences, on 'Tom May's Death' include the collections *Approaches to Marvell* and *Marvell and Liberty*, the contributors to both of which mention the poem only in passing (although the brief point on the poem made in the latter collection by Nicholas von Maltzahn is, as

the poem is not really as Royalist as it seems. Michael Wilding, for example, states that 'the hostility to May could be the result of internecine struggles within the Cromwellian camp'.²⁰ The most radical move of all has been to remove 'Tom May's Death' from the canon altogether, arguing that its exclusion from the so-called 'Popple' manuscript shows that it was not by Marvell at all. George deF. Lord, most famously, removed it from the body of his edition of the *Complete Poems* of Marvell, reluctantly including it in an appendix.²¹ Few have been so confident, but doubt about the authorship of the poem remains. Annabel Patterson, as we have seen, recently argued that 'its seemingly anti-Republican views, combined with its exclusion from the Popple manuscript, render the attribution debatable'.²² She also, and perhaps most tellingly, mentions 'Tom May's Death' only in passing in *Marvell and the Civic Crown*. She suggests that 'The Character of Holland' is Marvell's first political satire, with the footnoted proviso: 'If we exclude the troublesome "Tom May's Death", on the grounds that it was excluded from the Popple manuscript' (p. 119).

The description of the poem as 'Troublesome' is revealing, as it suggests that the kind of political model by which Patterson (and other critics) understand Marvell fits some of his writing only with a struggle. Poems that do not sit comfortably with such a model become a problem to such critics, rather than serving to question the proposed totalizing view of Marvell's work. If we either remove 'Tom May's Death' from Marvell's oeuvre, or try to ignore it, we risk repeating the kind of overtly

discussed below, a crucial one). Key books by Friedman, Leishman, Colie, Wallace, and most importantly, Patterson (*Marvell and the Civic Crown*) do not contain accounts of the poem. Two notable exceptions to this trend are: Robert Wiltenberg, 'Translating All That's Made: Poetry and History in "Tom May's Death"' in *Studies in English Literature* 31 (1991), pp. 117–130, which argues that the poem represents a 'vision of poetry and history more complex and more demanding' (p. 128) than that offered by May or, one might add, by several critics of the poem; and Diana Trevino Benet, 'Andrew Marvell and the Chorus of Old Poets' in *Literature-Interpretation-Theory* 3 (1992), 305–319, where it is suggested that the poem 'transcends its occasional particularities and belongs in the mainstream of Marvell studies' (p. 306).

²⁰ Wilding, *Dragons Teeth*, p. 115. See also Gerard Reedy, "An Horatian Ode" and "Tom May's Death" in *Studies in English Literature* 20 (1980), pp. 137–151. This article sets out prove that "An Horatian Ode" and "Tom May's Death" are not contradictory political statements' (p. 138) by depicting Marvell and May as being opponents within the same political side.

²¹ George deF. Lord (ed.) *Andrew Marvell: The Complete Poems*, especially 'A Note on the Text', pp. xxv–xxix. The most comprehensive dismantling of Lord's argument is achieved by Warren Chernaik in *The Poet's Time*, where he argues convincingly (in the course of an appendix) that the authority of the 'Popple' manuscript 'is by no means as absolute and unquestionable as some recent scholars have claimed' (p. 206).

²² 'Andrew Marvell and the Revolution', p. 110. See also Patterson's book *Andrew Marvell* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1994), p. 9, for further questioning of the poem's authorship.

political move which, as one recent critic shrewdly speculates, caused some early editions of Marvell to censor the poem in the first place: Nicholas von Maltzahn suggests that the ‘editor’ of the Popple manuscript ‘was enough of a Whig to resent “Tom May’s Death”, which is deleted from the volume’, and he goes on to place the ‘doctoring of the 1681 folio [... by] the deletion of “Tom May’s Death”’ in the context of an early seventeenth century propaganda drive for a ‘Whig’ Marvell.²³ This doctored, Whig Marvell is, as we have seen, currently re-emerging, and yet I will hope to show that this poem should be placed near the centre of Marvell’s work: troublesome and politically problematic ‘Tom May’s Death’ might well be, it is nevertheless central to the Marvell this thesis explores. Far from being a peripheral poem, or one whose authenticity we might question, ‘Tom May’s Death’ should be seen as crucial to the vision of Marvell as a writer who writes in a troubled, difficult relationship with his own art.

To return to the poem, and to pick up the plot after Marvell has described Tom May’s initial and ignominious confusion in the afterlife, Marvell clears up May’s own confusion, but immediately asks the reader to think about *another* writer. The man who May imagined to be an innkeeper turns out, as we have seen, to be Ben Jonson in the afterlife, through whom Marvell proceeds to berate May and his poetry. Jonson is a fitting figure to attack May, because May had expected to receive the Laureateship on Jonson’s death, as Aubrey writes: ‘He [May] stood in Candidature for the Laurell after B. Jonson; but Sir William Davenant carried it’,²⁴ and disappointment at this failure was thought to be a reason for May’s conversion to the Parliamentary cause. Marvell refers to this when, through Jonson, he asks:

Because some one than thee more worthy weares
The sacred Laurel, hence are all these teares?
Must therefore all the World be set on flame,
Because a Gazet writer mist his aim?
(lines 57–60)

Marvell’s reference to May as a ‘Gazet writer’ presumably refers to May’s career as a propagandist for Parliament, and his most significant work, published in 1647 was his *History of Parliament of England which began on Nov. 3. 1640* which was

²³ Nicholas von Maltzahn, ‘Marvell’s Ghost’ in Warren Chernaik and Martin Dzelzainis (eds), *Marvell and Liberty*, pp. 50–74, pp. 65, 67.

²⁴ *Aubrey’s Brief Lives*, p. 269.

augmented by his *Breviary of the History of the Parliament of England* of 1650.²⁵

Indeed, Marvell's poem itself refers to this work when it mentions that May died 'Before thou couldst great *Charles* his death relate' (line 76) in his *History*, going on to gloat that May 'left surviving *Davenant* still behind | Who laughs to see in this thy death renew'd' (lines 78–79). May's death is 'renew'd' in his failure to write about the death of King Charles, and in this way Marvell somehow turns the regicide against May himself.

However, critics have too often taken Marvell at his word in his attacks on May, and, in fact, Marvell makes a number of false moves, such that we should certainly not take his line of thinking at face value.²⁶ First, it is worth noting that May could not, at the time of Jonson's death, be legitimately described as a 'Gazet writer': in fact he became one during the Civil War. Therefore to apply this tag to May at this point in his career—that is when he 'mist' the aim of becoming laureate on Jonson's death—is an act of opportunist misappropriation. More important, however, is the probability that Ben Jonson himself would have been astonished to learn that his voice was used to attack Thomas May, because in 1627 he was himself a promoter of May's translation of Lucan's *Civil War*. In a dedicatory poem, 'To My Chosen Friend, The Learned Translator of Lucan, Thomas May Esq.', Jonson asks who it is who has 'brought | Lucan's whole frame unto us' (lines 19–20), before identifying May as 'The self-same genius!' (line 23)²⁷ The reversal of the 'real life' Jonson is complete when Marvell puts into Jonson's mouth a damning parody of this very translation by May. When Marvell's Jonson launches into his tirade against May, his first words are:

Cups more then civil of *Emathian* wine,
I sing (said he) and the *Pharsalian* Sign,
Where the Historian of the Common-wealth
In his own Bowels sheath'd the conquering health.
(lines 21–24)

²⁵ See also Clarendon's judgement on May, who declares that May 'prostituted himself to the vile Office of celebrating the infamous Acts of those who were in Rebellion against the King', quoted by Wiltenburg, 'Translating All That's Made', p. 121.

²⁶ David Norbrook points out that "'Tom May's Death" has become the main authority on Tom May's life' (*Writing the English Republic*, p. 272), before showing that this is a misplaced authority.

²⁷ Quoted from Ian Donaldson (ed.) *The Oxford Authors: Ben Jonson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 456–457. All quotations from Jonson will be from this edition.

These lines are a parody of the opening lines of May's translation of Lucan:

Warres more than civill on Æmathian plaines
We sing; rage licensd; where great Rome distaines
In her owne bowels her victorious swords.²⁸

Rome sheathing her sword in herself in an act of civil war becomes May killing himself through drink, and Marvell's clever reworking of May's own words deepens the slur on May himself. However, not only did the real Ben Jonson approve of this translation, May's work was not in itself incompatible with Royalism, and the continuation of the translation, three years later, was dedicated to the King.²⁹ By collapsing May the translator of Lucan to May the 'Historian of the Commonwealth', Marvell makes an audacious and anachronistic move, re-writing May's life to suit his purpose. Moreover, May himself was one of the foremost of the 'tribe of Ben', and his expectation of getting the Laureateship on the death of Jonson might not have been such an entirely unreasonable one. In this context, using Ben Jonson's voice to damn May is audacious, and a strong tang of misappropriation therefore hangs over 'Tom May's Death' and its use of Ben Jonson to do its dirty work. This shows, if nothing else, that Marvell—as in 'The Loyall Scot'—was capable of being rather brazen in his manoeuvrings between writers, as not only does he viciously, and in some ways unfairly, attack May himself, but also he risks misusing Ben Jonson as well. Not here the tactful Marvell of the poem to Milton, then, but a writer who confidently and anachronistically inhabits the voice of one of his greatest precursors.

Perhaps Marvell felt this boldness to be excusable given that the portrait of Jonson he gives is highly flattering, and serves as an illuminating contrast to his portrait of May:

'Twas *Ben* that in the dusky Laurel shade
Amongst the Chorus of old Poets laid,
Sounding of ancient Heroes, such as were
The Subjects Safety, and the Rebel's Fear.
But how a double headed Vulture Eats,
Brutus and *Cassius* the Peoples cheats.
But seeing *May* he varied straight his Song,
Gently to signifie that he was wrong.
(lines 13–20)

²⁸ Margoliouth I, p. 305.

²⁹ See Howard Erskine-Hill, *The Augustan Idea in English Literature* (London: Edward Arnold, 1983), pp. 183–185, in which a case is made for the Royalism of Tom May's Lucan translations.

Jonson is here presented as a being primarily loyal: before he even sees May, he is singing of ‘the Rebel’s Fear’. However, Jonson’s literary value, according to Marvell, goes beyond simply conservative defence of Kingship, he also describes him as the ‘Sworn Enemy to all that do pretend’ (line 30). Indeed, such is Jonson’s commanding presence in this imagined underworld, that even the greatest of classical writers fear him:

At whose dread Whisk *Virgil* himself does quake,
 And *Horace* patiently its stroke does take,
 As he crowds in he whipt him ore the pate
 Like *Pembroke* at the Masque, and then did rate.
 (lines 35–38)

What is striking here is the extraordinary height to which Marvell raises Jonson. As Robert Wiltenburg aptly puts it, ‘the extent of the authority attributed to Jonson is remarkable [...] Making Jonson not only the guide, but the commander—indeed the schoolmaster—of the ancients’.³⁰ If Jonson is placed above, and in authority over, these great writers, his position in relation to May is, naturally, all but contemptuous:

Far from these blessed shades tread back agen
 Most servil’ wit, and Mercenary Pen.
Polydore, Lucan, Allan, Vandale, Goth,
 Malignant Poet and Historian both.
 Go seek the novice Statesmen, and obtrude
 On them some Romane cast similitude,
 Tell them of Liberty, the Stories fine,
 Until you all grow Consuls in your wine.
 Or thou *Dictator* of the glass bestow
 On him the *Cato*, this the *Cicero*.
 Transferring old *Rome* hither in your talk,
 As *Bethlem’s* House did to *Loretto* walk.
 Foul Architect that hadst not Eye to see
 How ill the measures of these States agree.
 And who by *Romes* example *England* lay,
 Those but to *Lucan* do continue *May*.
 But the nor Ignorance nor seeming good
 Mised, but malice fixt and understood.
 (lines 39–56)

May’s literary lineage, in contrast to the impressive writers with whom Jonson is an equal, is seen as being a series of destructive peoples (the Goths, Vandals and the

³⁰ Robert Wiltenburg, ‘Translating All That’s Made’, p. 118.

destructive Alan tribe),³¹ and writers who wrote erroneous histories. Lucan was considered to be a Republican (see Chapter 6, below), and Polydore Vergil (1470 to 1555) was an Italian who published a history of England, *Anglia Historia*, in 1534 which was considered libellous. Moreover, Vergil was accused of burning the records of the history he wrote, a story which Marvell himself relates in *The Rehearsal Transpros'd*, in which he tells Parker 'if you would but imitate and burn all the Records of the times you write of, it were the only way imaginable to make you authentick'.³² These kinds of writers are, for Marvell, convincing only to 'novice statesmen' who are, in another covert attack on May's supposed drunkenness, 'Consuls' only in 'Wine'. And the implied criticism of such writers goes deeper than that, because by yoking together destructive peoples with disloyal writers, Marvell, as in *The Rehearsal Transpros'd* and elsewhere, forges an intimate link between cultural and literary destructiveness. Polydore Vergil and Lucan (and by extension May himself) sit comfortably in a list with destructive tribes of peoples who caused cultural destruction. Writing is here, for Marvell's Jonson, as for Marvell elsewhere, both hugely powerful and potentially hugely destructive. May's crime is the creation of a kind of writing which is damagingly inaccurate; it is damaging both to other writing, and to society itself. In particular, however, Marvell identifies a particular problem to be May's comprehension of English history by way of Roman example. This is something that May repeatedly attempts in his *History of Parliament*, and Marvell argues (following other critics of May) that these Roman parallels mislead more than they illuminate.³³ What Marvell sets up in this passage, then, is an image of writing as misleading, inaccurate, destructive and dangerous.

Yet Marvell's Jonson does present a strong and apparently viable alternative to this powerfully negative model of writing as exemplified by Thomas May, and this provides in turn Marvell's most direct and affirmative pronouncement on the possible role of a writer:

³¹ See Margoliouth I, p. 305.

³² Smith, *R.T.*, p. 326. See also Denys Hay, *Polydore Vergil: Renaissance Historian and Man of Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952) for accounts of Vergil's various misadventures, including being imprisoned by Henry VIII. What emerges from Hay's book, nevertheless, is that Vergil (like Lucan) was certainly not the villain that Marvell implies by his list, and was in fact a good historian who was in the circle of the best scholars of the day, including Thomas More and Erasmus. This is yet another audacious Marvellian misappropriation.

³³ Margoliouth I, p. 305, mentions criticism of May along these lines by another contemporary.

When the Sword glitters ore the Judges head,
 And fear has Coward Churchmen silenced,
 Then is the Poets time, 'tis then he drawes,
 And single fights forsaken Vertues cause.
 He, when the wheel of Empire, whirleth back,
 And though the World's disjointed Axel crack,
 Sings still of ancient Rights and better Times,
 Seeks wretched good, arraigns successful Crimes.
 But thou base man first prostituted hast
 Out spotless knowledge and the studies chast.
 Apostatizing from our Arts and us,
 To turn the Chronicler to *Spartacus*.
 (lines 63–74)

We might take this as a convincing answer to the question of what Marvell proposes as an alternative to May's foolish, and rebellious, Roman comparisons: a powerful, Jonsonian model of an honest and effective poet. This has been an attractively stable position for some critics. R.I.V. Hodge, for example, argues confidently that: 'There is no possibility of irony here. The movement of the verse carries complete conviction', describing these lines as Marvell's 'strongest, most confident Royalist statement'.³⁴ More telling still, Warren Chernaik tacitly assumes that Marvell's voice is identical to that of Jonson, stating that: 'The poet's advantage over the ordinary man is that he inhabits two worlds at once. He is not confined to the immediate phenomenal world and its muddled, shifting values, but can preserve a vision of "better Times"'.³⁵ Moreover, Chernaik's book title (*The Poet's Time*) and epigraph (lines 63–66 of 'Tom May's Death') implicitly give these lines an extra-textual significance for Marvell's whole career, and allow an affirmative and confident reading of that career. But more care is needed here, especially in the light of what we have already seen of Marvell's difficult and tangled relationship with his own medium, and serious reservations might be entered about this straightforward reading of these lines. We might firstly point out that these words are not in Marvell's 'own' voice, even insofar as poetry is, in a limited sense, in the 'voice' of its writer: they are placed directly in the mouth of Ben Jonson.³⁶ Also, although Jonson is clearly presented as a poetic hero by Marvell, there are reasons, already indicated, as to why

³⁴ R.I.V. Hodge, *Foreshortened Time: Andrew Marvell and Seventeenth Century Revolutions*, p. 116.

³⁵ Chernaik, *The Poet's Time*, p. 4. Elsewhere in his book, Chernaik sees Marvell as being part of 'the unending war of truth and falsity' (p. 11), which again presupposes, to my mind erroneously, that Marvell thought that writers were especially able to distinguish 'truth' from 'falsity'.

³⁶ John Dixon Hunt points out one obvious problem when he states that 'Marvell had not yet practised what he lets Jonson preach' in *Andrew Marvell: His Life and Writings* (London: Elek, 1978), p. 131.

Jonson's view here might not easily equate with Marvell's own. In particular, the act of using Jonson's voice is a bold act fraught with the possible charge of misrepresentation. To read these lines in the context of the audacious Marvellian misappropriation of Jonson is to suggest how far from 'straight' these lines may be read.

These reservations are underlined by several other aspects of the poem which do not allow us to settle on the affirmative model for poetry that Marvell puts into Jonson's mouth. The first problem with which the reader is presented is the position of 'Tom May's Death' itself in relation to the models of writing which Marvell voices through Jonson. A suggestively similar model is given in the poem to Lovelace, in which Marvell looks back longingly to a time when: "Twas more esteemed to give, than weare the Bayes' (line 8). The Lovelace poem itself seems broadly to fit this praise-giving poetic model, given that it is itself a poem of high praise to Lovelace; it effectively gives, rather than wears, the bays. But the bitter invective of 'Tom May's Death' is culpable in Marvell's own terms; it is a poem which—to take up the negative terms of the Lovelace poem again—'with most Art destroys' (line 13). Also, Marvell himself had just written 'An Horatian Ode', and could himself be liable to the charge of being a 'chronicler to Spartacus', as in that Ode he documents and to some extent celebrates Oliver Cromwell's rebellious career. Would Marvell himself, then, be at risk of inclusion in Jonson's imagined censure? These kinds of problems are deepened by the fact that certain details of Jonson's ideal for poetry sound outdated and even naïve in the context of the Civil War. Jonson seems to think that May is the 'first' poet to change his coat (thou [...] *first* prostituted hast), an assertion which might well have rung hollow to a contemporary reader, given the constant and repeated shifts of allegiance which characterised the careers of many writers during the Civil War. This in turn serves to underline an obvious (yet frequently overlooked) point that Jonson himself is long dead, and so we might have cause to wonder if Marvell's/Jonson's ideal model for poetry is being presented as one which any current writers can possibly hope to live up to. The idea of a long-lost tradition is enforced by a series of dead (and idealised) writers that Marvell invokes to berate May. He imagines the mortal remains of Chaucer and Spenser denying Tom May a final resting place:

If that can be thy home where *Spencer* lyes
And reverend *Chaucer*, but their dust does rise
Against thee, and expels thee from their side,
As th'Eagles Plumes from other birds divide.
(lines 85–88)³⁷

Yet another great English writer lies behind this pronouncement, as these lines echo Ben Jonson's own poem on Shakespeare, 'To the Memory of My Beloved, The Author, Mr William Shakespeare, And What He Hath Left Us':

[...]Soul of the age!
The applause, delight, the wonder of our stage!
My Shakespeare, rise: I will not lodge thee by
Chaucer or Spenser, or bid Beaumont lie
A little further, to make thee a room;
Thou art a monument without a tomb.
(lines 17–22)³⁸

Shakespeare is thus called upon by Jonson as an arbiter of current writing ('with rage | Or influence chide or cheer the drooping stage', lines 77–78). Shakespeare occupies, therefore, an analogous position in Jonson's poem to that which Jonson himself does in 'Tom May's Death': Jonson is the judge of May's poetic achievement, just as Shakespeare is the judge of theatrical accomplishment in 'To the Memory of My Beloved [...] Shakespeare'. Shakespeare, however, in Jonson's tribute, does not need a tomb in which to rest, he is given the ultimate accolade of being his *own* tomb.³⁹ By contrast, in 'Tom May's Death', May is specifically denied either a place in high literary company or, in fact, any resting place at all. Indeed, we might notice that the whole of 'Tom May's Death' narrates an unsatisfied wandering for May, in which he repeatedly, in death, tries to find his way, and repeatedly fails. The poem opens, as we have seen, with what might be described as a series of dislocations and confusions: May is perpetually unable to 'determine in what place he was' (line 5),

³⁷ It has been suggested that this poem was amended at this point to take account of May's exhumation during the Restoration. I think this unlikely, as the passage makes perfect sense in the context of the poem as it stands, indeed without this passage, the narrative of the poem—May being sent by Jonson to his final resting place—makes less sense.

³⁸ It is also interesting that 'To His Worthy Friend Doctor Witty Upon His Translation of the Popular Errors' opens with the lines: 'Sit further, and make room for thine own fame, | Where just desert enrolls thy honoured name' (lines 1–2). This too draws on Jonson on Shakespeare—'To draw no envy, Shakespeare, on thy name | Am I thus ample to thy book and fame' (lines 1–2)—and therefore strengthens the likelihood that Marvell is alluding to Jonson's poem to Shakespeare in 'Tom May's Death'. Both of these similarities are noted in Margoliouth I, pp. 306–7.

³⁹ Interestingly, Milton himself adapted this idea when he imagined Shakespeare's readers becoming his tomb, making 'us marble with too much conceiving', 'On Shakespeare', line 14.

and each time he thinks he has found his bearings, he is revealed to be all the more bewildered. Particularly telling is his failure to realise that Jonson is sending him up with a version of his own work, and the resulting demand 'for his place among the Learned throng' (line 28). Jonson, of course, orders that May must 'Far from these blessed shades tread back again' (line 39), warning him off the graves of the great English poets Chaucer and Spencer. Perhaps most significantly, not only is May ordered away from the throng of great writers (Jonson sends May to 'Where sulphury Phlegethon does ever burn', line 90), at the end of the poem he simply vanishes in a 'Cloud of pitch' (line 99). Marvell's final, and most damning, attack on May is—in an inversion of Jonson on Shakespeare—to disallow him from finding the kind of settled finality which would allow him to be mourned, and celebrated, as a writer.

But does May's wandering confusion relate only to May (and by extension his writing), or might it, as I have suggested, also apply to other writers and writing, maybe even that of Marvell himself? To place 'Tom May's Death' in the context of the Civil War—a context of a general writerly confusion and difficulty—would suggest that the confused and wandering figure of May is more akin to many writers of the Civil War period, than is the confident and strident Ben Jonson. Indeed, the difference between Marvell himself and Jonson is emphasised by the very fact that Marvell alludes to Jonson's tribute to Shakespeare. That elegiac piece was written in an earlier age and, as such, seems a confident, perhaps audacious, piece of canon making. 'Tom May's Death' on the other hand, written from the midst of a far more difficult time, not only fails to speak consistently in the voice of its writer (as Jonson did in his elegy for Shakespeare), it reverses Jonson's decision on Shakespeare, pushing a writer away from the canon, rather than drawing him in. This might, for one thing, reflect the great gap between Marvell and Jonson as writers, and suggest that Marvell himself might be closer to the figure of Tom May, than to the impossibly past and idealised figure of Ben Jonson. In this way, 'Tom May's Death' might work almost as strenuously against Marvell's own writing as it works against Thomas May's.

3. Marvell and ‘Gazet’ Writing

What had changed between the age in which Jonson canonised Shakespeare, and that in which Marvell, as it were, *un*-canonised Thomas May? England had gone through a bitter Civil War, of course, and this is something which is examined in detail in the next chapter. There had also been, however, more directly relevant changes in relation to writing itself, and there is a clue to their nature in a small detail in ‘Tom May’s Death’. In the heart of the poem, Tom May is described as a ‘Mercenary Pen’ (line 40) and Marvell then asks, witheringly, ‘Must therefore all the World be set on flame, | Because a *Gazet* writer mist his aim?’ (lines 59–60, my italics). In describing May as a ‘Gazet writer’, Marvell makes use of a word (‘Gazet’) which had not long been in use,⁴⁰ and which makes the implicit criticism that May’s writing was of a particularly debased, ‘Mercenary’ kind: what we would now call journalism. This is, I would suggest a crucial context not only for ‘Tom May’s Death’ itself, but also for much of Marvell’s writing.

Printed political comment on contemporary events dates back almost as far as the printing press, and twenty-seven ballads on the Northern Rising of 1569 are still in existence.⁴¹ The first English newsbooks were printed in the 1620s, but until the 1640s news was ‘a commercial sideline among a handful of printers’ (p. 34); in the decades after the 1640s it took off to an extraordinary extent.⁴² This explosion of this new kind of writing was partly as a result of the government losing control of publication (in 1641 the Star Chamber, responsible for the licensing of books, was abolished as Charles lost control of the government of the country),⁴³ and partly in

⁴⁰ *OED* gives the first usage to Ben Jonson in 1605. Marvell’s relationship to the word is interesting, and perhaps suggestive of his preoccupation with this kind of writing, as he was the first person (in 1676) to use the word as a verb; see the ‘gazette’ entry in *OED*.

⁴¹ C. John Sommerville, *The News Revolution in England: Cultural Dynamics of Daily Information* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 18.

⁴² The commonplace idea the volume of print dramatically increased in this period has recently been rendered less certain; see Nigel Smith, *Literature and Revolution in England, 1640–1660* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), p.24 and Joad Raymond, *Making the News: An Anthology of the Newsbooks of Revolutionary England 1641–1660* (Gloucester: Windrush, 1993), pp. 5–6. However, it still seems likely more was published in this period, and all agree that the *kinds* of things published changed (namely, there were far more pamphlets and newsbooks than before) and, as Raymond shows at length, there was a widespread public perception that the quality of writing as a result of this had gone drastically downhill. See also Nigel Wheale, *Writing and Society: Literacy, Print and Politics in Britain 1590–1660* (London: Routledge, 1999) in which it is stated that: ‘The scale and variety of materials published in the 1640s were without precedent’ (p. 67).

⁴³ See Jeremy Black, *The English Press 1621–1861* (Stroud: Sutton Press, 2001), p. 5.

response to the sudden need for oppositional propaganda: the two fighting factions in the Civil War sought not only to win the battle on the field of war, but in the minds of the country. Caricature of the opposing side became the norm, and vicious satire was commonplace. As Joad Raymond puts it:

Simultaneous with the outbreak of profound civil division and the consequent war, was the development of a new professional occupation, a breed of men, and perhaps one or two women, who, according to contemporaries, sowed sedition and spread great untruths. The products of these men and women, some said, were a contagion that flew into all quarters of the land to infect public opinion, ravage social hierarchies and lay the country waste. These people, a 'generation of Vipers', wreaked their damage by writing diurnals or mercuries. In modern language, they were journalists.⁴⁴

For Marvell, I shall argue, this distaste for, and suspicion of, 'journalistic' writing infected and refracted his view of *all* writing, as if this kind of debased writing lowered not just itself, but the written word in general, and had direct and negative political consequences. As Marvell himself put it late in his career, '*O Printing!* how hast thou disturb'd the Peace of Mankind! that Lead, when moulded into Bullets, is not so mortal as when founded into Letters!'.⁴⁵ Charles I's own portrayal of pamphleteering in the period chimes with these issues interestingly:

Nor can I suffer so much in point of honour by those rude and scandalous pamphlets (which, like fire in great conflagrations, fly up and down to set all places on like flames) as those men do, who, pretending to so much piety, are so forgetful of their duty to God and me.⁴⁶

Charles imagines 'rude and scandalous' published pamphlets to cause 'great conflagrations' that are pointedly out of control; they set '*all* places on like flames'. His implication is clearly that once the power of a certain kind of writing is unleashed, it burns everyone and everything in its path, not just those who are the ostensible subject of its attack.

Marvell's own most direct reflections on such issues came early in 1651 when he wrote two prefatory verses (one in English, one in Latin) to a Hull Doctor's

⁴⁴ Joad Raymond, *Making the News*, p. 1.

⁴⁵ Smith, *R.T.*, p. 5. It should be pointed out that there is also a heavy dose of irony at work here, as Marvell is mimicking his opponent Samuel Parker's view of printing. However, the length of Marvell's attack on printing, as well as the convincing savagery deployed suggest that Marvell himself might have at least partly concurred with the view. His purpose in *The Rehearsal Transpros'd* was, after all, to dismantle Parker's reputation, and in doing so he may to some extent have obscured and twisted his viewpoint to suit the satiric purpose.

⁴⁶ Edward Scott (ed.) *Eikon Basilike* (London: Elliot Stock, 1880), pp. 110–111.

translation of a 1638 Latin medical text.⁴⁷ In the Latin poem to Witty, Marvell launches a scathing attack on the state of current written output:

Nempe sic innumero succrescunt agmine libri,
Sæpia vix toto ut jam natet una mari.
Fortius assidui surgunt a vulnere præli:
Quoque magis pressa est, auctior Hydra redit.
Heu quibus Anticyris, quibus est sanabilis herbis
Improba scribendi pestis, avarus amor!
(lines 1–6)

[Truly, books are increasing in such an endless stream
That now scarcely one cuttle-fish swims in the whole sea.
Unceasing presses spring more strongly from the wound:
And the more it has been pressed, the larger the Hydra returns.
Alas, by what Anticyras, by what herb is curable
This violent plague, this fierce love of writing!]⁴⁸

What is interesting here is the extent to which Marvell considers the whole cycle of the writing and printing process, a little like someone today saying that bad writing is a ‘waste of trees’; Marvell seems to have a sense of the value of the materials of printing in comparison with the poverty of writing itself. The ‘fierce’ desire of people to write is viewed as a ‘plague’, and this renews a recurrent Marvellian association (already seen in the poem to Flecknoe) of writing and disease. Like the plague itself, this disease is seen as a violent one which afflicts a vast number of people. It is clear that Marvell’s attack on sheer quantity of writing (such that it is exhausting the world’s resources of writing materials) must be set in the context of the huge output of the revolutionary press described above. Marvell, then, both turns a fact about contemporary printing into a witty poetic attack on the printing press itself and, in doing so, makes his contempt for most printed material clear.

However, he proposes an ingenious, but devastating, solution to the plague of people’s ‘fierce love of writing’:

Vtile Tabacci dedit illa miserta venenum,
Acri veratro quod meliora potest.
Jamque vides olidas libris fumare popinas:
Naribus O doctis quam pretiosus odor!
(lines 9–12)

⁴⁷ See Margoliouth I, p. 307 for the dating of this publication early in 1651.

⁴⁸ Translation by McQueen and Rockwell, p. 37.

[Compassionate, she gave the useful poison of tobacco,
Which is more efficacious than sharp hellebore.
And now you see smelly clouds smoke from books:
Oh, to learned nostrils what a precious odor!]⁴⁹

The burning of books, something which would now be almost sacrilegious, Marvell imagines as sweet smelling and desirable, a cure (the looked for 'Anticyras') for the plague-like disease of writing. This suggests the degree of Marvell's contempt for the quantity and quality of writing emerging from the presses at the time. Witty's own work is, of course, excepted from this general censure, and Marvell declares: 'Hunc subeas librum sancti ceu limen asyli, | Quem neque delebit flamma, nec ira Jovis' (lines 17–18) ['May you enter this book as the threshold of a sacred refuge, | Which neither the flame nor the wrath of Jove will destroy'.] Marvell makes what is for him an unusual move, but was very common in the period more generally: the imagining of writing as a timeless refuge against the vagaries of time. Also, characteristically, Marvell does not imagine his own writing as being worthy of this timelessness, asking 'Ah mea quid tandem facies timidissima charta?' (line 15) ['Ah, my fearful pages, what, pray, will you do?'], going on to state that 'Exequias Siticen jam parat usque tuas' (line 16) ['The musician even now prepares your obsequies'.] So whilst Witty's writing is imagined as living forever, as it deserves to, Marvell's own pages within Witty's book would be burnt and forgotten, if it were not for their proximity to this worthy work. We might simply read this as a witty turn on the kind of self-deprecation that is not unusual in prefatory verses. However, the fact that Marvell imagines that his own writing deserves to go the same way as all the plague of bad writing suggests that Marvell imagines this 'violent Plague' to afflict not just others, but himself, and that his own writing is by no means exempt from his scathing censure.

Marvell was not alone in finding problems with the changed state of writing, and one anonymous writer stated that:

I do think that his, [Henry Walker's] and many other scurillous Pamphlets, have done more mischief in this Kingdome then ever all my Lord of *Essex's* or Sir *Thomas Fairfaxes* whole train of Artillery ever did.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ McQueen and Rockwell, p. 37.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Raymond, *Making the News*, p. 14.

For Marvell, the kind of writing that this scurrilous pamphleteering displaced made things all the worse, as in his youth it must have seemed like there was a viable escape from what many saw as the grubby, mercenary, world of journalism: the court of Charles I, and its vibrant literary culture. Marvell's University years (from 1633 to 1640) were ones in which national politics were dominated by the court of Charles I, and in particular a period which has come to be known as Charles's 'personal rule', the period between March 1629 and April 1640 during which he ruled without Parliament. The standard 'Whig' interpretation of this period assumes that these were years in which the Civil War was brewing, and that Charles's decision not to call Parliament was a tyrannous and anti-democratic strategy. Kevin Sharpe has, however, convincingly argued both that this was not the way in which many contemporaries saw it, and that we need positively to reassess this period and to acknowledge that 'Charles from 1629 ruled a country that, unusually in Europe, enjoyed a decade of peace and the prosperity that came in its wake'.⁵¹ Sharpe has also questioned the idea that there were two warring factions—court and country—during this time, which eventually became the Cavaliers and the Parliamentarians. Instead, he argues, that these 'factions' were in fact both loyalist groups who formed a sustainable system of 'Criticism and Compliment' within the Caroline court.⁵²

Not only was an all embracing and embraced court central to national life,⁵³ artists and poets became increasingly central to disseminating images of the court,⁵⁴ and poets and dramatists associated with the court were famous figures. This was, then, a time at which poets at court prospered as part of a functioning and successful

⁵¹ Kevin Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. xviii. This follows on from Conrad Russell who, in *The Causes of the English Civil War*, argues that in looking for causes of the Civil War: 'We are not trying to find causes for a conflict of classes. Nor are we trying to find causes for a conflict between a court and a country, or a government and an opposition' (p. 4). This implies, like much else in Russell's book, that England was not hopelessly divided before the war.

⁵² He argues that 'any idea that the civil war was a conflict of two cultures dissolves when we examine the evidence', going on to assert that 'The court [...] did not occlude the country ideology nor did country ideology exclude the court. It embraced the court.' *Criticism and Compliment: The Politics of Literature in the England of Charles I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 9, pp. 15–16.

⁵³ As Kevin Sharpe states, since the late sixteenth century, 'news of the court, copies of court sermons, accounts of festivals and plays percolated back to the country. To the court, too, men and women began to look for models – of dress, behaviour and values', *The Personal Rule of Charles I*, p. 209.

⁵⁴ Kevin Sharpe suggests that 'the Tudor monarchs, in consolidating their strength, were quick to appreciate the importance of the court as the image of their rule, and the value of artists and scholars in the representation of their authority. The printing press offered the opportunity to disseminate an ideology to the literate political nation' in *Criticism and Compliment*, p. 2.

courtly network, and were known throughout the country. Marvell himself played a small part in this culture, writing verses in Latin and Greek for a 1637 collection by Cambridge students celebrating the birth of Princess Anne, and his affection for this Royalist literary culture can be seen long afterwards. In the late 1640s, as Royalism seemed on its last legs, Marvell wrote a group of poems with a strong sense of the merits of that literary culture: the Villiers, Hastings and Tom May elegies, the poetic tribute to Richard Lovelace, as well as the moving scene about Charles's execution in 'An Horatian Ode' all suggest this affection.⁵⁵ More than this, the years of Charles's 'personal rule', during which Marvell wrote his first public poems, were ones which made an indelible mark on Marvell's literary style: Marvell's poetry was almost all written in rhyming couplets, a mode—as we shall see more clearly in Chapter 5—strongly associated with Caroline culture. Even when Marvell, later in his life, became a political scourge of a restored Cavalier culture in the 1660s and 70s, his writing therefore still bore the traces of this courtly, Royalist past.

Affection for, or perhaps more accurately, attachment to, Royalist literary form must have made the dispersion of Charles's court, the stable and nurturing basis for this literature—and the concomitant rise of journalism—all the more troubling for a writer such as Marvell. And there were more changes still. The theatres—such fertile ground for literary writing—were closed in 1642; Royalist poets, no longer able to circulate their poems in manuscript at court turned, *en masse*, to print;⁵⁶ and those same poets, who had previously been part of a Caroline court culture took sides in a bitter war. Robert Herrick and Richard Lovelace, for example, stayed loyal to the King whilst Thomas May and John Milton sided with Parliament. What was once a group of writers who wrote for the same, apolitical cause—that of the literary culture of the court—was now split into bitterly hostile factions, all of which were rushing to the presses in an attempt to promote their political cause. Also, the rise of what might loosely be termed radical writers marked a huge change in the kind of writing in the period: the (still) shocking writings of such extraordinary figures as Lilburne, Winstanley, Trapnel and Coppe—who went to press with their incendiary social, religious and apocalyptic demands for change—invited people to think in previously

⁵⁵ We shall see, in Chapters 4 and 6 below that this was, nevertheless a complicated and vexed affection.

⁵⁶ See Chapter 4 below

unimagined ways, and in turn printed writing became associated with such radicalism. Overall, the changes in the sphere of the written word from the time when Marvell was a young man at University, writing poetry as part of a peaceful Caroline culture, were enormous. These changes were, I hope to show, not ones which Marvell ever really forgot, or stopped puzzling over, and might, in part at least, underlie the endless perplexity (and sometimes hostility) of his thinking about writing.

Many of Marvell's lyric poems might be read fruitfully in the light of these historical changes to writing, but 'The Garden' presents itself as a pressing candidate for such analysis, given that it is perhaps Marvell's most complex and ambivalent exploration of the differing roles for a writer.⁵⁷ The poem takes as its initial subject the vanity of those who seek to win civic plaudits, going on to figure an escape from such writerly vanity:

How vainly men themselves amaze
To win the Palm, the Oke, or Bayes;
And their uncessant Labours see
Crown'd from some single Herb or Tree.
Whose short and narrow verged Shade
Does prudently their Toyles upbraid;
While all Flow'rs and all Trees do close
To weave the Garlands of repose.
(lines 1–8)

The idea of vain writers eagerly striving after plaudits for their writing might be situated in the context of a world in which writing had become, for some, associated with grubby debasement. The escape from this to a garden retreat which sounds distinctly courtly in its luxury and indulgence might represent, for Marvell, a positive vision of an alternative kind of writing or, perhaps even more powerfully, an *alternative to* writing. Later in the poem the poetic speaker declares rapturously: 'What wond'rous Life in this I lead!' (line 33) before describing the luxurious pleasures of the garden itself.

However, as is often the case with Marvell's lyric poetry, the argument of the poem is slightly at odds with itself: how can a poet be writing a poem and damning those who write poetry at the same time? How can he be at once retreating from, and

⁵⁷ 'The Garden' is one of Marvell's most written-about poems. In 1970, in 'My Ecchoing Song': *Andrew Marvell's Poetry of Criticism*, Rosalie Colie described the 'huge slagheaps of material' already written on 'The Garden' and her own guide to that material, in her footnotes (pp. 141–177) is full and helpful.

entering into, the pleasures associated with winning civic awards? We might immediately notice that the word ‘Garland’ sits uneasily with the idea of genuine ‘repose’, as if repose itself can only be conceived through the language of the outside world: the garlands of vain public achievement are precisely what the poetic speaker attempts to escape from, and yet his safe haven is described in precisely those terms. In the following stanza, the idea of escape from the public, literary world is seen to be all the more implausible, as the world into which the speaker escapes is strikingly literary:

When we have run our Passions heat,
 Love hither makes his best retreat.
 The *Gods*, that mortal Beauty chase,
 Still in a Tree did end their race.
Apollo hunted *Daphne* so,
 Only that She might Laurel grow.
 And *Pan* did after *Syrinx* speed,
 Not as a Nymph, but for a Reed.
 (lines 25–32)

We are, then, in the world of Ovid (and other literary articulations of Greek myth) and the compelling and popular stories about the Greek gods. This sounds, then, more like a typically urban literary myth of a green retreat than a convincing rural withdrawal from the city. Moreover, the myths to which the poem turns are more than just stories about gods, they themselves are the most literary of Greek myths. The Apollo and Daphne story tells of Apollo’s chasing of Daphne. When he catches her, Daphne turns into a laurel tree, and Apollo ultimately finds consolation in the creation of a wreath from the laurel tree as a sign of his former love.⁵⁸ The tree itself gives him no consolation for his loss, but an object in a synecdochal relationship with the tree, the laurel wreath, does. It therefore acts as a powerful figure for poetry itself, which can represent or figure something but cannot be the thing itself. The story of Pan and Syrinx is similarly literary. Pan chased Syrinx until she came to a stream, at which point Syrinx turned into marsh reeds. Pan, picking the reeds whilst sighing with grief, created a consoling musical sound, which moved even the gods with its beauty. Both of the myths to which Marvell alludes in this stanza, as Peter Sacks puts

⁵⁸ In my reading of both this and the Pan and Syrinx myths, I am indebted to Peter Sacks’s account in *The English Elegy: Studies in the Genre from Spenser to Yeats* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), pp. 1–18.

it: ‘portray a turning away from erotic pursuits and attachments to substitutive, artificial figures of consolation’ (p. 6)—they replace love with something artistic and literary. The place to which Marvell’s poetic speaker retreats to get away from the competitive world of civic writing, then, turns out to be characterised by myths which insist upon art as compensation for loss; this supposed retreat from literature is extraordinarily literary. Furthermore, Marvell’s idiosyncratic versions of these myths make the artistic substitutions more important than the things themselves. In Marvell’s garden, the metamorphoses into substitutes become not undesirable side effects, but the very purpose of the pursuit: Apollo hunts Daphne ‘*that she might* Laurel grow’, and Pan wants Syrinx ‘for a Reed’ rather than ‘as a Nymph’.

If this is a literary world, and not a genuinely ‘natural’ escape, the stanza which follows suggests that this will, nevertheless, be a world of extraordinary, and very tangible, abundance:

What wond’rous Life in this I lead!
 Ripe Apples drop about my head;
 The Luscious Clusters of the Vine
 Upon my Mouth do crush their Wine;
 The Nectaren, and curious Peach,
 Into my hands themselves do reach;
 Stumbling on Melons, as I pass,
 Insnar’d with Flow’rs, I fall on Grass.
 (lines 33–40)

From the dizzyingly literary world of the fourth stanza, this stanza invests in far more concrete and sensually exotic pleasures. ‘The Garden’, for a moment, appears to be a real—if astonishingly abundant—place that is sufficiently tangible to catalogue its edible fruits. But the movement from passivity, to stumbling, and finally to falling suggests that this is, like the Garden of Eden, a paradise that is ultimately ruined.⁵⁹ The next stanza, however, persists with a transcendent vision of the pleasures of this garden:

Mean while the Mind, from pleasure less,
 Withdraws into its happiness:
 The Mind, that Ocean where each kind
 Does streight its own resemblance find;
 Yet it creates, transcending these,
 Far other Worlds, and other Seas;

⁵⁹ The reference to Eden is made explicit in Stanza VIII, which states: ‘Such was that happy Garden-state, | While Man there walk’d without a Mate’ (lines 57–58).

Annihilating all that's made
To a green Thought in a green Shade.
(lines 41–48)

This stanza at first glance presents an exciting vision of the power of the mind, not only to recreate the natural world, but also to transcend it, to make it better. This is a common claim for art itself, that it can outdo nature, and thus 'The Garden' presents its reader with a powerful argument for the transcendent power both of its narrator and itself as poetic art. The 'green Thought' of the final couplet might be associated with the potent fertility of both the garden itself and the imaginative space created by the poem. But at the same time this is a highly dangerous idea, and a closer look at the language of the closing couplet makes this clear. The word 'Annihilating', might immediately give us pause, and although the word did not then have its current associations of military destruction, the word had, in many ways, more worrying connotations. In particular, it was associated with the destruction of the soul, as well as of the body (*OED* 1.b), and had alarming political associations: *OED* (2) has 'To make null and void, make of none effect, annul, cancel, abrogate (laws, treatises, rights, etc)'. Interestingly, in 1630, the word was used to defend Parliamentary rights that were being 'annihilated' by the King.⁶⁰ The phrase 'Annihilating all that's made', then, might suggest a poetic speaker who is politically suspect, and destructive of 'all that's made', rather than one who seeks genuinely, and modestly, to withdraw from civic life. Indeed, the doubled and thus emphasised word 'green' might—as well as suggesting fertility—in a contradictory sense suggest immature naivety, and perhaps even 'fear, jealousy, ill humour, or sickness'.⁶¹ If there is a hint of envy in 'green', we might think back to the opening of the poem with poets enviously and vainly outdoing each other for civic prizes. In this way the poem offers to turn savagely back on itself, and might suggest that poetic visions—even if apparently well intended—can be not just naïve, but damagingly so.

To contextualise 'The Garden' too directly or bluntly is difficult for the practical reason that its date remains uncertain, and also because its complexity belies easy explanation. However, we might, tentatively, think about 'The Garden' in the context of the remarkable changes afoot in writing at the mid-century, given its initial

⁶⁰ *OED* (4).

⁶¹ *OED* (3). For greenness as fertility, see *OED* (2) and (6) and for immaturity and naivety, see *OED* (5), (7) and (8).

proposal of an escape from the grubby world of civic plaudits, for which ‘men themselves amaze’. The fact that this escape turns out to be shot through with such ambivalence and difficulty—and the same kind of vanity from which writing was seen to be an escape in the first place—perhaps suggests the extent of the problems with which Marvell wrestled. If ‘The Garden’ is Marvell’s proposal of a kind of writing that escapes the competitive, debased world of ‘journalism’, then it is a proposal that is plagued with doubts and difficulties. Marvell may be determinedly critical and sceptical about writing, both about writing in general, and about that of particular individuals, but his alternatives to this debased kind of writing are rarely simple or easy. If, in ‘The Garden’, writing proves troublesome and difficult, then it might be an apt expression of Marvell’s more generally troubled, difficult relationship with writing, and in turn of writing’s own troubles and difficulties in the mid-seventeenth century.

4. Marvell and His Own Writing

If Marvell looked upon the changes to writing with such suspicion and scepticism, and attacked certain individual writers and their work with real venom, how did that affect his own writing, and his opinion of it? We might get a clue as to the poles between which Marvell thought about his own writing in two comments at either end of his writing career. In 1651, in ‘To His Worthy Friend Doctor Witty upon his Translations of the Popular Errors’ Marvell informed his readers, by way of self-defence, that ‘something guides my hand that I must write’ (line 38). More than twenty years later, in 1676, he described the widespread criticisms of his book *Mr. Smirke: Or, the Divine in Mode* and suggested that he might as well have burned ‘the whole Impression’ of that book before asking, despairingly, ‘Who would write?’⁶² These two contradictory impulses—compulsion to write coupled with a sense of the futility, and perhaps the damaging nature, of writing—are indicative of Marvell’s ambivalent attitude to his own work.

The extent to which Marvell was reticent in writing is most famously exemplified by both his relatively modest output as a writer, and by his failure to

⁶²Letter to Edward Harlay, 1 July 1676, in Margoliouth II, p. 346.

publish (or even to circulate in manuscript) a large proportion of his work.⁶³ Much of what is now thought of as his best work was not published until the posthumous *Miscellaneous Poems* of 1681. Moreover, when Marvell *did* write, a distinct sense of reticence is discernable with regard to his own work, and this might be seen even in some of his letters. For example, in July of 1653 Marvell wrote to Cromwell to inform him of Dutton's progress:

It might perhaps seem fit for me to seek out words to giue your Excellence thanks for my selfe. But indeed the onely Ciuility which it is proper for me to practise with so eminent a Person is to obey you, and to performe honestly the worke that you haue set me about. Therefore I shall use the time that your Lordship is pleas'd to allow me for writing, onely to that purpose for which you haue giuen me it.⁶⁴

This reserve might largely be explained by politeness and humility when addressing such a powerful man and, as we know from 'An Horatian Ode', Cromwell was, for Marvell, an awesome, even terrifying figure. However, either Marvell's circumlocution is misjudged, in the manner of Polonius's long and rambling promises in *Hamlet* to speak plainly and briefly,⁶⁵ or his concern is more than mere politeness. Marvell's protestations here do seem to go slightly beyond the call of duty, and suggest an almost bashful self-awareness about his own writing which finds a certain resonance with what we have seen of his other work in the period.

In *The Rehearsal Transpros'd*, Marvell makes what appears to be a discriminating attack on certain kinds of writers:

Those that take upon themselves to be Writers, are moved to it either by Ambition or Charity: imagining that they shall do therein something to make themselves famous, or that they can communicate something that may be delightful and profitable to mankind. But therefore it is either way an envious and dangerous imployment.⁶⁶

⁶³ Peter Beal gives a full account of this and states that Marvell is represented in manuscript mainly 'by a number of contemporary or near-contemporary copies of various of his poems—for the most part his later, satirical pieces' (p. 18) and that, more generally, 'Marvell's poems before 1660 had little circulation in MS outside his immediate circle' (p. 21). Peter Beal (ed.), *Index of English Literary Manuscripts* Volume II: 1625–1700 (London: Mansell, 1993).

⁶⁴ Margoliouth II, p. 304.

⁶⁵ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, II.2.

⁶⁶ Smith, *R.T.*, p. 159.

At first glance, this might appear to continue earlier criticisms of Samuel Parker's writing (that it is moved only by 'Ambition' and is thus 'envious and dangerous')⁶⁷ that are a recurrent trope in *The Rehearsal Transpros'd*. For a moment, we might think that Marvell is portraying his own writing as good, and defensible (and, as such, driven by 'Charity'), and Parker's as bad and culpable (and therefore 'envious'). Had Marvell, then, late in his career, found something like confidence in his own writing? Possibly, and he must have found a certain kind of assurance to write, and publish, at this length, but closer inspection casts doubt as to whether or not he makes such clear distinctions between different motives for writing, and the differing effects of that writing. The phrasing of this passage argues that whether or not a writer is ambitious, or apparently well intentioned, 'it is *either way* an envious and dangerous employment': it is not at all clear that 'envious' pertains to ambition and danger to 'Charity'. Rather, Marvell implies, any kind of writing might be both 'dangerous' *and* 'envious'. It follows, then, that the stable distinction between his own work and Parker's—between writing which could be a cause of civil disturbance and that which tries to prevent it—is unsettled. Marvell's own work here might be seen as being as much under attack as that of Parker.

Something similar happens in *Mr. Smirke*, in which writing also seems indirectly to be Marvell's subject. Early in that work, he claims that the clergy of England:

supply the press continually with new books of ridiculous and facetious argument. Wherein divers of them have succeeded even to admiration; insomuch that by the reading thereof, the ancient sobriety and seriousness of the English nation hath been in some good measure discussed and worn out of fashion.⁶⁸

Marvell does not exempt his own work from this censure, however, ending his long work with the declaration 'I am weary of such stuffe, both mine own and his' (p. 90), thus making both himself and his opponent guilty of a pernicious kind of writing. These closing comments are, admittedly, in contrast to the affirmation in the prefatory 'To the Captious Reader' that: 'I write to a nobler end, than to revenge my

⁶⁷ I am taking 'envious'—as well as having our modern connotations of 'full of envy', *OED* (1)—as also having the now obsolete meanings (which were current in the seventeenth century) of 'full of ill will; malicious, spiteful', *OED* (2).

⁶⁸ Alexander Grosart (ed.), *The Complete Works in Verse and Prose of Andrew Marvell*, 4 vols (London: Fuller Worthies' Library, 1875) IV, p. 6.

petty concernments' (p. 5). Yet self-castigation is not limited to a weary comment at the end of this work, and much of *Mr. Smirke* might be said to undermine this initial clear division between the 'nobler' Marvell and his 'petty', vengeful satiric opponent. At one point Marvell describes the qualities of an 'Animadverter', something which Marvell had labelled himself in *The Rehearsal Transpros'd*, as 'an animal which hath nothing humane in it but a malicious grinne, that may provoke indeed but cannot imitate so much as laughter' (p. 22), thus turning a criticism of his opponent back on himself. A little later, Marvell discusses the issue of writing anonymously: 'while we write at our own peril, and perhaps set our names to it, (for I am not yet resolved whether I can bear reproach or commendation)' (p. 26). Again, Marvell is not complacent that his own satiric writing can escape the kind of censure he is directing at others; on the contrary, he seems to imagine, and even to endorse, the possibility that precisely the same criticisms might be directed towards him.

We might also find traces of a reticent self-consciousness in a poem dedicated to another great Parliamentarian, 'Upon Appleton House, to my Lord Fairfax', written whilst Marvell was working as a tutor to Thomas Fairfax's daughter at Nun Appleton, Fairfax's country estate. Like the letter to Cromwell, it is addressed to a man of great political power, and the opening section of the poem appears to point, self-deprecatingly, at 'Appleton House' the *poem* as much as the house itself, firstly with the mention in the first line of 'this sober Frame', and then later with the idea of the composition of the poem/building:

But all things are composed here
Like Nature, orderly and near:
In which we the Dimensions find
Of that more sober Age and Mind.
(lines 25–28)

John Wallace notes the 'working analogy between the building and the poem'⁶⁹ here, and there might therefore be a hint, as in the poem to Lovelace, of an age when writing itself was more proportional, when 'Modest ambition studi'd' (line 9), with the 'But' of the first line serving to distinguish the Fairfax dwelling (and perhaps the Marvellian text) from the more typical and currently prevalent kind of building/writing. Marvell attempts to situate his own poem in this more modest

⁶⁹ *Destiny His Choice*, p. 237.

tradition, rather than in the current tradition in which an architect/writer would ‘vault his Brain’ (line 6) for vain creations. The key issue, for Marvell, is (typically) a sense of proportion and humility:

*Humility alone designs
Those short but admirable Lines,
By which, ungirt and unconstrain’d,
Things greater are in less contain’d.*
(lines 41–44)

By using the word ‘Lines’ Marvell explicitly enters the vocabulary of poetic as well as architectural creation, and thus solidifies the link between architecture and literature, arguing that this poem should, in its proportional modesty nevertheless have the ability to express or ‘contain’ the greatness of Nun Appleton. This is, for a moment, imagined to be an almost miraculous attainment whereby poetic art achieves something in its ‘admirable Lines’ which is impossible elsewhere. As it is later elaborated, ‘Honour better Lowness bears, | Then That unwonted Greatness wears’ (lines 57–58), reiterating a point which is, by now, familiar: for Marvell vanity is the worst crime of all, and leads both to aesthetic, cultural and political evils. However, as in the letter to Cromwell, in which the protestations of brevity go on rather too long, ‘Upon Appleton House’ does not live up (or down) to its proportional, reticent, and distinctly Jonsonian, ideals. As Hirst and Zwicker put it, ‘The poem must have begun as a tribute to, perhaps even a send-up of Johnson’s [sic] *To Penshurst*. This poem had run its course in the tenth stanza’.⁷⁰ It is certainly true that ‘Upon Appleton House’ as a whole sprawls way beyond the length of a poem such as ‘To Penshurst’ and, as we shall see more clearly in the next chapter, becomes deeply entangled with Civil War anxieties, as the poetic speaker seems almost to spiral out of control. One commentator has gone so far as to suggest that Marvell employs this kind of poetic narrator in the poem in order to make him the subject of Marvell’s satire.⁷¹ If this is the case, then it is possible that the sprawling ‘Appleton

⁷⁰ Derek Hirst and Stephen Zwicker, ‘High Summer at Nun Appleton, 1651: Andrew Marvell and Lord Fairfax’s Occasions’ in *Historical Journal* 36 (1993), pp. 247–269, p. 263. Kari Boyd McBride aptly describes the Jonsonian opening of the poem as a ‘false start’ in *Country House Discourse in Early Modern England: A Cultural Study of Landscape and Legitimacy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), p. 159.

⁷¹ Thomas Healy, “‘Dark all without it knits’: vision and authority in Marvell’s *Upon Appleton House*” in Thomas Healy and Jonathan Sawday (eds), *Literature and the English Civil War*, pp. 170–188. In this article Healy provocatively suggests that ‘Marvell’s poetry rarely confidently reflects the idealism

House' is yet another Marvellian essay on how *not* to write a poem, and a demonstration that proportional, judicious poetry is no longer possible.

The length of 'Appleton House' is, for Marvell, highly unusual and more characteristic are his lyric poems, which—in their brief, reflexive self-questioning—all but disappear into themselves.⁷² One such is 'The Coronet'—perhaps the most overtly self-referential of Marvell's lyrics—which offers a tight and interlocking argument that needs to be quoted at length:

When for the Thorns with which I long, too long,
With many a piercing wound,
My Saviours head have crown'd,
I seek with Garlands to redress that Wrong:
Through every Garden, every Mead,
I gather flow'rs (my fruits are only flow'rs)
Dismantling all the fragrant Towers
That once adorn'd my Shepherdesses head.
And now when I have summ'd up all my store,
Thinking (so I my self deceive)
So rich a Chaplet thence to weave
As never yet the king of Glory wore:
Alas I find the Serpent old
That, twining in his speckled breast,
About the flow'rs disguis'd does fold,
With wreaths of Fame and Interest.
Ah, foolish Man, that would'st debase with them,
And mortal Glory, Heavens Diadem!
(lines 1–18)

The complex movements of this poem defy easy précis, but it is clear that the poem describes the move from attempting to 'redress' a wrong, to a realisation that even such a gesture is itself fraught with difficulties. The poem charts a particular attempt to make good the wrong done to Christ by replacing the crown of thorns with a beautiful and decorative crown of flowers. Clearly, however, this is also a poem

it attempts to celebrate. A playful, self-ironic exposure always seems to lie behind his most ardent praise' (p. 170).

⁷² Rosalie Colie's book, *'My Ecchoing Song': Andrew Marvell's Poetry of Criticism* is central here. She argues that 'Marvell is a critic in his poetry' (p.xi) and also, in arguing that 'comparison of Marvell's verse with that of his Cavalier contemporaries, particular masters of their form, shows the idiosyncratic nature of his critical investigations, his trick of writing a poem and writing about it at the same time' (p. xii), effectively argues for the centrality of this fact in Marvell's artistic superiority to many of his contemporaries. Also important in this context is Christopher Ricks's influential essay on Marvell which demonstrates the predominance of 'reflexive imagery' in his lyric poems, 'Andrew Marvell: "Its Own Resemblance"' in *The Force of Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp. 34–59, p. 34.

about writing religious poetry,⁷³ and the extent to which that can ever be possible and honourable. The impossible attempt to redress Christ's wrong is thus refigured as an impossible literary project. The crown of flowers, in a typically Marvellian strategy, becomes a poetic crown, such as that imagined in 'The Garden'; the specific language underlines this, as collections of poems were, in this period, often termed 'garlands'.⁷⁴ The parenthetical 'so I my self deceive' is a devastating moment, and its point is made even clearer with the mention of 'wreaths of Fame and Interest': poetic art has become self-serving rather than serving others. Also, as was the case with the poetic speaker of 'The Garden', this self-deceit springs, worryingly, out of a desire to do good, to redress a wrong. Both poems seem to insist that culpably vain writing comes not just from wicked impulses, but from good ones as well. In this way sharp criticism of writerly motives, as we have seen in other contexts, very readily rebounds on itself, and we are forced to ask whether the text we are reading can be exempt from the censure applied to others.

The complex and self-reflexive nature of this poem is both exemplified and complicated by another key parenthetical phrase: '(my fruits are only flow'rs)'. We might first take 'fruits' to mean 'fruits of labour', in this case the fruits of a writer's labour, namely poetry. Thus, at a first glance, this is a typically self-deprecating gesture indicating that Marvell's poetic speaker considers that his writing is not like fruit—nourishing, or more broadly, fruitful, germane, fertile and so on—but that it is flower-like and therefore merely decorative. Pushing at the metaphor buried in the word 'fruit' as it is typically used, Marvell discovers that the fruits of his labour are not really fruits at all, but flowers, a stage before fruit in the life cycle of a flowering plant; the stage which is decorative rather than useful, superficial rather than nourishing. However, if we consider this image in more detail, the line turns back on itself. Flowers play a crucial role in creating fruit, as the flower is the first stage in the process which results in fruit. Flowers are not, then, purely decorative, but are just as important a part of the life cycle of a plant as the fruit is itself. Fruit and flowers exist in a reciprocal, not a parasitic or unbalanced relationship, and thus the stable reading,

⁷³ See Rosalie Colie, who argues that in 'The Coronet' Marvell 'makes his figure stand for the writing of poetry', in *Andrew Marvell's Poetry of Criticism*, p. 80.

⁷⁴ *OED* (4) has 'garland' as: 'A collection of short literary pieces, usually poems and ballads; an anthology, a miscellany'.

whereby Marvell dismisses his own writing, is upset. The image, in fact, becomes deliberately circular and almost unimaginable, and it is genuinely poised between being a defence of, and an attack on, writing.

Things become still more entangled with the description of the Serpent which ‘About the flow’rs disguis’d does fold, | With wreaths of Fame and Interest’ (lines 15–16). The ostensible suggestion is that the flowers are in themselves morally defensible and proper, but that the ‘twining serpent’ of Satan ruins them by causing the maker of the coronet to think about ‘Fame and Interest’ rather than about glorifying Christ. To put this in the terms of ‘The Garden’ the poet becomes like one of those writers vainly amazing themselves rather than withdrawing into the garden. As in ‘The Garden’ however, things are not as simple as they first appear, because what the flowers are twined with might well be, oddly, more flowers: the poet is, supposedly, building a ‘garland’ to redress the wrong done to Christ which is, semantically, the same thing as a ‘wreath’. This raises the possibility that the garland was itself *already* a ‘wreath of Fame and Interest’, even before the ruinous image of Satan as serpent is introduced into the poem. Again, the poem is left in a difficult position in relation to itself.

‘The Coronet’, however, does end with a positive, if drastically reduced role for itself:

Or shatter too with him my curious frame:
And let these wither, so that he may die,
Though set with Skill and chosen out with Care.
That they, while Thou on both their Spoils dost tread,
May crown thy Feet, that could not crown thy Head.
(lines 22–26)

One might question whether or not the verb ‘crown’ accurately describes something that is being trodden on but this is, of course, precisely the point. Poems which seek to ‘crown’ in any other way are inevitably vain and as such ultimately driven by the satanic ideals of earthy fame and pride.⁷⁵ ‘The Coronet’, then, attacks a confident model of poetry, which is contrasted to a reticent art which Marvell—although

⁷⁵ The possible allusion to Philip Sidney’s lines ‘You that with allegory’s curious frame | Or others’ children changelings use to make’ (*Astrophil and Stella*, Sonnet 28, lines 1–2) underscores the self-reflexivity of this poem, as Sidney’s poem itself is a (paradoxically complex) plea for ‘simplicity’ (line 12) of interpretation. Quoted from Katherine Duncan-Jones (ed.), *Sir Philip Sidney: The Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 163–164.

apparently aware that it is ultimately unobtainable—seems constantly to strive towards.

What we have seen in this chapter of Marvell's explorations of writings should have demonstrated two things. First, that Marvell's interest in writing can legitimately be described as a 'preoccupation': Marvell writes about his medium more than many other writers in the period and beyond, and more than one might expect, especially for a writer whose oeuvre consists of a large number of overtly political works. Secondly, that these explorations of writing show a certain kind of consistency, in that writing, for Marvell, is always under question, and is a source of problems and worries: when writing about writing Marvell is often negative, but almost always questioning, and seems to be acutely aware of the inherent problems and potential for misunderstandings which writing possesses. Marvell, in contrast to many major and minor writers in this period—from Jonson and Lovelace to Milton and Dryden—constantly doubts writing, its quality and efficacy, and more generally suspects that, in the suggestive phrase of S.L. Goldberg, there is an unbridgeable 'gap between the poet's activity and the activities he is writing about'.⁷⁶ We might extend this apt comment on the evidence of this chapter, and argue that this kind of realisation is revealed in his prose work as well as his poetry.

These concerns might usefully be set in the context of the radical changes to writing which occurred in the period, and thus the prevalence of writerly worries in Marvell's work might constitute a response to those historical problems. Yet these concerns, as well as being intimately linked to historical events, are, in the ways in which they are played out, uniquely Marvellian. One of the unfortunate changes to our view of Marvell which the contextual revolution has effected through its turn to politics is the domestication—and an accompanying loss of individuality—of a difficult and unique writer. Marvell has been of late more often explained and understood, than questioned and puzzled over: the Marvell we have seen in this chapter, although differing greatly in artistic success, remains a puzzling and difficult writer; a writer who, through always writing about his medium, refuses to allow his writing to become a transparent window through which we can clearly view either Marvell himself, or the subject of the writing. In the next chapter we shall see how

⁷⁶ S.L. Goldberg, 'Marvell: Self and Art' in Carey (ed.), *Andrew Marvell*, p. 167.

this difficult, reticent art related to, expressed, and explored, the most historically significant event to occur in Marvell's own lifetime.

Chapter 3

‘Our Civill Wars have lost the Civicke crowne’: Marvell, Writing, and the Civil War

1. The Civil War

In 1642, Civil War broke out between King and Parliament. Marvell’s first decade as an adult, then, was to be dominated by bitter civil warfare between two rival factions in England. To make things more disturbing, these were factions that were all but unheard of when he had arrived at Cambridge as a young boy: the Civil War had, in one sense, sprung from nothing. Although Marvell’s explorations of the difficulties of political and historical writing were wide-ranging, even all encompassing, the event that most preoccupied him was this horrific Civil War and its highly troubled aftermath. Recent estimates suggest that approximately 80,000 people died in the fighting (including a large number of non-combatants caught in the crossfire) and that a further 120,000 died of disease caused directly by the war.¹ In 1642, many young men of Marvell’s age took up arms to fight for one side or the other in this war. Marvell, however, either in this year or the next left England and travelled around the continent, as a letter from Milton to Bradshaw in 1653 testifies.²

Despite this deliberate withdrawal from the action itself, however, the Civil War, its horrors, and its messy, uncertain aftermath left their lasting imprint on Marvell’s literary imagination. Although this context has been widely discussed recently in relation to Marvell, it has usually been treated as a political context against which to determine Marvell’s allegiances. Is it possible to approach the question of the relationship between the Civil War and Marvell’s writing in a different way? The first thing to note is that the Civil War was the event which, directly or indirectly, drove many of the changes to writing described in Chapter 2, so

¹ See Charles Carlton, ‘Civilians’ in John Kenyon and Jane Ohlmeyer (eds), *The Civil Wars: A Military History of England, Scotland, and Ireland, 1638–1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 272–305, p. 273 (and generally), for a compelling and disturbing account (including eyewitness testimony) of the widespread horrors of the Civil War.

² Milton states that ‘he [Marvell] hath spent foure years abroad in Holland, France, Italy, & Spaine, to very good purpose’ in a letter of 21 February, 1652/3, reprinted in Donno (ed.), *The Critical Heritage*, p. 99. The contrast to Milton’s own attitude to the Civil War is striking: he returned home from his own continental tour as the war was beginning ‘lest [...] he should be travelling abroad while his countrymen were fighting for liberty’ (*DNB*). See also Pierre Legouis, *Andrew Marvell: Poet, Puritan, Patriot* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 9 for an assertion that Marvell left the country in 1642 or 1643.

we might say that Marvell's preoccupation with writing already had an intimate link with this war. The war was also crucial to Marvell's thinking as it presented its own acute problems for a writer of any sensitivity. Such writers were forced to ask questions about how such unprecedented and horrific events could adequately be represented in writing, and how the old forms and genres of writing might react under this kind of pressure of circumstance. Nigel Smith suggests—by way of introducing perhaps the most comprehensive survey of the literature of the period to date—that 'the literature of mid-seventeenth-century England underwent a series of revolutions in genre and form, and that this transformation was a response to the crises of the 1640s'.³ As we shall see, Marvell not only responded to these literary 'revolutions' in interesting and questioning ways, but also was himself active in bringing such changes about.

Some commentators, however, have seen the problems created in psychological terms. Jonathan Sawday describes the kind of psychological self-division which he speculates must have occurred in this period in response to the bloody, self-wounding conflict:

In the period of the Civil War, to be mysteriously divided is to see one's sense of selfhood under threat both externally and internally. The war becomes a psychological as well as a political confrontation, and the language of self-division is appropriated in order to explore that confrontation.⁴

Kevin Sharpe has a more literary-historical notion of this difficulty, and states that 'The civil war [...] fractured the Elizabethan world-picture'.⁵ Of particular relevance is Sharpe's claim that the 'conflict not only shattered the unity of the commonweal, it cast its shared languages into the arena of contest' (p. 119) and he goes so far as to assert that the 'authorizing texts and languages of early modern England were appropriated, deconstructed or simply destroyed' (p. 120). One of the most important of these authorising languages was the ancient idea of the state as a body, with the King at its head. Thomas Hobbes, writing his great work of political philosophy

³ Smith, *Literature and Revolution*, p. 1.

⁴ Jonathan Sawday, "'Mysteriously divided": Civil War, madness and the divided self' in Thomas Healy and Jonathan Sawday (eds), *Literature and the English Civil War*, pp. 127–143, p. 140.

⁵ Kevin Sharpe, *Remapping Early Modern England: The Culture of Seventeenth-Century Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 118.

Leviathan in 1651, gave a terrifying vision of what civil war does to that fundamental metaphor:

For by Art is created that great LEVIATHAN called a COMMON-WEALTH, or STATE, (in latine CIVITAS) which is but an Artificiall Man [...] in which, the *Soveraignty* is an Artificiall *Soul*, as giving life and motion to the whole body [...] *Equity and Lawes*, an artificiall *Reason* and *Will*; *Concord, Health; Sedition, Sicknesse*; and *Civill war, Death*.⁶

Sedition makes the body-politic ill, but civil war kills it. This leaves, as Hobbes was well aware, a great gap of authority, and Hobbes himself—a former Royalist—advocated filling this gap with a rigid obedience to the new ruling power.⁷ In the political sphere Marvell ultimately took Hobbes's advice, becoming part of Cromwell's government, yet at the same time his writing was deeply affected by the Civil War, and provides some of the most powerful, and interesting explorations of writing under the huge imaginative difficulties created by such a war.

This particular civil war, however, finally ended in a way which made it all the more difficult to articulate as, in January 1649, Charles I was beheaded in front of the Banqueting Hall in London. In the metaphor of state-as-body, the King was the head, and therefore to decapitate the King is to decapitate the nation itself. The overwhelming conceptual problems created by regicide are most tellingly (if not best) expressed by one of Marvell's most important employers, Sir Thomas Fairfax. Fairfax was, of course, one of the key Parliamentary leaders in the Civil War, and led the New Model Army against the King. Even he, though, seemed to be shocked by the regicide, and wrote a poem on the occasion entitled 'On the Fatal day. Jan: 30 1648':

Oh Lett that Day from time be blotted quite
And lett beleefe of 't in next Age be waved
In deepest silence th'Act Concealed might
Soe that the King-doms-credit might be saved
But if the Power devine permitted this

⁶ Richard Tuck (ed.), *Thomas Hobbes: Leviathan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 9. All quotations from *Leviathan* will be taken from this edition. See also Hobbes's assertion that any form of government, however oppressive, 'is scarce sensible, in respect of the miseries, and horrible calamities, that accompany a Civill Warre' (p. 128).

⁷ In the conclusion to *Leviathan*, Hobbes states that one of his main reasons for writing was because 'divers English books lately printed [...] have not yet sufficiently taught men, in what point of time it is, that a Subject becomes obliged to the Conqueror' (p. 484). He had argued, earlier in the book, that if a monarch loses a war then 'his Subjects are delivered from their former obligation, and become obliged to the Victor' (p. 154).

His Will's the Law and ours must acquiesse.

Curæ loquuntur Leves

Ingentes stupent.

[Light cares may be spoken, great [troubles] render dumb.]⁸

Although the poem speaks of the acceptance of God's will, there is a sense here that this belief in divine providence is tested to its limit by the unthinkable act of regicide. We '*must* acquiesse', but Fairfax makes it clear that the event itself makes this acquiescence extremely problematic. The poem refuses to attempt to make the event itself more comprehensible, or to put it into any narrative or conceptual framework. In fact, the poem—itself an interesting comment on the issue of writing in a time of political turmoil—is effectively an attempt to *un*-write the regicide: the event must be 'blotted', 'waved', and only 'silence' is at all appropriate. The withdrawal from the English language into Latin at the end of the poem might be read as a comment on the failure of English itself to accommodate such a shocking event of English national suicide. Moreover, what the Latin section says is all the more telling, as it emphasises that this event is one of those that renders us dumb, rather than one which can be spoken of and thereby understood. What follows explores how Marvell responded to these various challenges and difficulties, and how he himself figured the problems inherent to writing after the Civil War and regicide.⁹

⁸ Quoted from Peter Davidson (ed.), *Poetry and Revolution: An Anthology of British and Irish Verse 1625–1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 356–357. The translation of the Latin is given by Davidson. See Fairfax's *DNB* entry for his troubled relationship with the political manoeuvrings after the Civil War, in which it is recorded that Fairfax stated his own 'abhorrence' of the regicide, and may have made moves to stop it after the trial. Later, he considered reasons for the invasion of Scotland to be 'not sufficient grounds to make war upon a neighbour, specially our brethren of Scotland' (*DNB*). See also John Wilson, *A Life of Thomas, Lord Fairfax* (London: John Murray, 1985) for an account of the same events, pp. 142–162.

⁹ Andrew Barnaby, in his interesting—and refreshingly perplexed—article 'The Politics of Garden Spaces: Andrew Marvell and the Anxieties of Public Speech' in *Studies in Philology* 97 (2000), pp. 331–361, also makes the link between Marvell's writing and 'the anxieties of public life that arose in the revolutionary decades' (p. 334), arguing that 'Marvell constantly plays out the collapse of public authority as a crisis of linguistic confidence' (p. 335). Barnaby's focus, however, is on ideas of 'retreat' in Marvell's poems, suggesting that they represent 'much needed respite from the cacophony of culture' (p. 335), and an effort 'to elude the public disease [...] to inoculate himself' (p. 335). I would argue that the idea of retreat is, in Marvell's work, at all times more self-consciously problematic than this allows, and that this argument does not take account of the many occasions on which Marvell takes not retreat but forwardness as his subject.

2. Civil-War Writing

Marvell was probably not in England for most of the Civil War itself, which suggests his lack of interest in *fighting* in the war. He did, however, on his return to England, write several poems out of the turmoil surrounding the end of the War, the regicide, and the rise and fall of Cromwell that suggest an intense interest in *writing* and its relation to the war. The first poem Marvell wrote on his return tackles issues surrounding the war directly, and shows that Marvell was much preoccupied with how the war might have changed the way people wrote. ‘To His Noble Friend Mr. Richard Lovelace, upon his Poems’ was published as part of Lovelace’s *Lucasta*, a volume which presents itself as a piece of nostalgia for the golden age of the 1630s, before Civil War tore the nation apart.¹⁰ Marvell’s poem centres on the issue of the current state of the nation’s writing which is contrasted to a time before the ‘Civill Wars [...] lost the Civicke crowne’ (line 6). This poem, then, no less than the poem about Richard Flecknoe, figures writing as something that is *now* intensely problematic. But this might also be read as a powerful Marvellian comment on the relationship between politics and writing: national trauma creates bad writing. Harking back to a time represented by Lovelace, in which writing was constructive rather than destructive, Marvell despairs at the current hostility driving most writing.

Moreover, in a notorious poem published as a quarto pamphlet in the same year as the Lovelace poem, ‘An Elegy upon the Death of my Lord *Francis Villiers*’ (1648)—notorious for its particularly savage Royalism and because its authorship has come under constant question—writing and the Civil War are again at issue. Villiers himself died fighting in the Civil War on the Royalist side, and yet the opening of the poem is more of an essay on the gap between observation and action in war, than a direct comment on Villiers himself:

Tis true that he is dead: but yet to chuse,
Methinkes thou Fame should not have brought the news
Thou canst discourse at will and speak at large:
But wast not in the fight nor durst thou charge.
While he transported all with valiant rage
His Name eternizd, but cut short his age;
On the safe battlements of Richmonds bowers
Thou wast espyd, and from the guilded Towers

¹⁰ For a more detailed consideration of this poem, and *Lucasta* as a whole, see Chapter 4 below.

Thy silver Trumpets sounded a Retreat,
Farre from the dust and battails sulphry heat.
(lines 1–10)

The initially blunt acceptance of Villiers's death is quickly replaced by an attack on the personified 'Fame', and it is almost as if Marvell makes Fame's failure to be involved in the fighting responsible for the death. Fame's lack of involvement is explicitly put down to cowardice ('thou *durst* not charge'), which is sarcastically contrasted with what Fame *can* do, namely (and damningly), 'discourse at will and speak at large'; Fame was gossiping while the brave Villiers met his bloody end in battle. The use of 'thou', in place of the more formal and respectful 'you' makes the contempt all the more biting: whilst 'thou' can in some contexts imply affection, here it connotes a lack of respect, a contemptuous, belittling over-familiarity. Moreover, Fame is figured as sheltering at a dishonourably safe distance, and in distasteful opulence (in 'gilded Towers'), in stark contrast to the dust and terrifying rage of the battle. This is an opening, then, which sets involvement against observation in such a way as to prioritise action and, conversely, to denigrate spectatorship. This places the poem—as a piece of observation rather than an act of fighting—in a (characteristically) strange position in relation to itself. The next section of the poem, as if aware of this possible criticism, sets the nature of its own grief against 'cowardice':

But until then, let us young *Francis* praise:
And plant upon his hearse the bloody bayes,
Which we will water with our welling eyes.
Teares spring not still from spungy Cowardize.
The purer fountains from the Rocks more steep
Destill and stony valour best doth weep.
(lines 17–22)

Margoliouth notes that rosemary dipped in blood was the standard tribute to the war dead in the Civil War, so this might be an allusion to this rather gruesome wartime elegiac practice.¹¹ But we might note that it is not rosemary, but 'bayes' that are used as a tribute to Villiers here, and that bays have the double function of marking military and poetic achievement. The fact that Villiers's bays are 'bloody' of course suggests that former (and in one strand of this poem, superior) achievement.

¹¹ Margoliouth I, p. 435.

However, the bays which offer tribute to Villiers are watered with ‘our welling eyes’, which complicates the matter as it suggests, if we take ‘water’ to mean ‘make grow’, that his military prowess is somehow intimately linked to, or augmented by, poetic art. Indeed, tears and elegiac poetry in this period are very closely linked: might Marvell be suggesting here that elegiac poetry is necessary in order to confer Villiers’s military ‘bayes’?¹² This effective poetic marking of Villiers’s death is, however, firmly delineated from gossipy, cowardly ‘Fame’ and, it is insisted that this poem does not itself originate in ‘spungy Cowardize’: it springs, rather, from ‘stony valour’. For a moment, then, the poem has a clear mandate: that of bravely and purely eulogising Villiers. Eventually, however, these distinctions—between good and bad report, honourable and cowardly poetry—become blurred, because the poem ends with the determined promise that:

[...] we hereafter to his honour will
 Not write so many, but so many kill.
 Till the whole Army by just vengeance come
 To be at once his Trophée and his Tombe.
 (lines 125–128)

Taking the lead from the heroic Villiers, who ‘cut his Epitaph’ (line 120) out of enemy soldiers, this conclusion seems explicitly to reject writing in favour of military heroism. The efficacy of action in providing a suitable elegy for Villiers is asserted with the grim, yet enthusiastically promoted, notion of building an impressive tomb of dead Parliamentary soldiers. In one sense, this reading takes away a ‘problem’ associated with attributing this poem to Marvell. Although it might, politically, seem rather anomalous, as it fantasises with relish about the ignoble deaths of Cromwell and Fairfax—both men with whom Marvell would work closely in the next decade—it does chime with Marvell’s other poems of this period which make writing their subject. The Villiers elegy may, then, look inexplicable set alongside the Cromwell poems and ‘Upon Appleton House’ if we expect political continuity in Marvell’s work, but it is very much Marvell’s if we notice that it, like those works, attacks the issue of writing itself. Although the Villiers elegy is not the most complex poem Marvell wrote—or the most politically or morally defensible one—it is seriously

¹² See also Chapter 4, below. The volume title to which Marvell contributed the year after the Villiers elegy itself indicates the link: *Lachrymae Musarum* (tears of the muses) being a collection of Royalist elegies.

interested in writing, the relationship between the writer and his or her historical subject matter, and above all, is highly questioning of the act of writing itself. More than any other poem Marvell wrote, the Villiers elegy powerfully presents the most severe censure that might be levelled at writers, particularly by those involved in military action, and thus serves as a reminder of Marvell's acute awareness of such possible criticism.

In his elegy 'Upon the Death of Lord Hastings' (1649), written in the following year, Marvell further meditates on the relationship between writer, subject and politics, concluding with the complex and powerful couplet: 'For *Man* (alas) is but the *Heavens* sport; | And *Art* indeed is Long, but *Life* is Short' (lines 59–60). The contrast between 'art' being long and life short which this closing couplet makes might be read as a telling comment on the writing of the period, and its attempts to do justice to a fundamentally changed world after the Civil War. Chapter 4 below explores the possibility that this is a profound critique of the elegist's art, which might usefully be compared to twentieth century disillusion with the propriety and efficacy of poetic mourning. Marvell's last poem of the 1640s thus offers a telling commentary on his work in this period. As a published poem it seems to assert the need to write in the face of death, loss, and cultural destruction, but uses this opportunity—unlike so many of the contributors to *Lachrymae Musarum*, who assert the positive aspects of the written, and printed word—to question the efficacy and propriety of writing under such circumstances. 'Upon the Death of Lord Hastings' is a more complex and difficult poem than the Villiers elegy, but like that poem it furnishes evidence of the extent to which Marvell is able to entertain an exceptionally negative view of writing after the Civil War.

One of Marvell's most telling explorations of Civil War writing is achieved in 'Upon Appleton House, to my Lord Fairfax'. We have seen in Chapter 2 how the opening of that poem presents itself as a consideration of poetry itself, and indeed sets itself Jonsonian ideals of writing which it then fails to live up to. Nevertheless, many critics have, despite this evidence, placed the poem firmly in a Jonsonian tradition and seen Marvell as presenting Nun Appleton, its house and grounds, as a wondrous retreat from—and even miraculous resolution of—the world of Civil War politics. Harold Toliver, for example, suggests that 'while reflecting the complex problems of the times from the civil wars to individual moral struggles, "Appleton

House” manages to bring them together in a relatively unified emotional movement and to propose a common solution to them’.¹³ This view—oddly enough, coming from a critic writing in the ‘old’ new critical tradition—more or less predicts the recent contextual responses to ‘Upon Appleton House’, in which the poem is generally read as an affirmation of Fairfax’s decision to retire from national politics, and of his possibly positive role in reshaping the future. For example, A.D. Cousins argues that the poem is a re-writing of a basically Royalist tradition which usually celebrates the ‘moral attributes’ (p. 54) of a Royalist landowner, but in this case celebrates Fairfax, a Parliamentary general.¹⁴ Cousins concludes that the poem provides an argument that Fairfax, through his retirement at Nun Appleton, can ultimately ‘contribute significantly to the renewal of a devastated England that has only recently emerged from civil war’ (p. 54). But does ‘Upon Appleton House’ really furnish such an affirmative vision of the country estate it describes?

The key passage here is a section of the poem that explicitly presents itself as a history of England, and which is, in turn, dominated by an episode which considers Fairfax and his relation to the Civil War. It begins with Fairfax as a military hero:

From that blest Bed the *Heroe* came,
Whom *France* and *Poland* yet does fame:
Who, when retired here to Peace,
His warlike Studies could not cease;
But laid these Gardens out in sport
In the just Figure of a Fort;

¹³ *Marvell's Ironic Vision*, p. 114. See also Leishman, *The Art of Marvell's Poetry*, who sees the poem as firmly rooted in the traditions of praise to the patron and ‘catalogue of delights’, pp. 250–291.

¹⁴ A.D. Cousins, ‘Marvell’s “Upon Appleton House, to my Lord Fairfax” and the Regaining of Paradise’ in Conal Condren and A.D. Cousins (eds), *The Political Identity of Andrew Marvell*, pp. 53–84, p. 54. See also Michael Wilding, *Dragons Teeth*, in which it is suggested that the poem represents a tactful and respectful argument to Fairfax that retirement from politics might not be possible or desirable, pp. 138–172; Malcolm Kelsall, who, in his classic account of country houses and their literature, suggests that ‘Marvell claims for the country house that it stands as a sign of peace for which the whole nation longs’, *The Great Good Place: The Country House and English Literature* (London: Harvester, 1993), p. 55; Susan Snyder, who states that ‘Appleton House provides a haven of postwar retirement closely guarded from the evils of the fallen world’, *Pastoral Process: Spenser, Milton, Marvell* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 50; and the earliest significant account of the genre, by G.R. Hibbard, which argues—in what is a slightly tacked-on section of the essay—that Nun Appleton represents, for Marvell, ‘nature humanized and made to serve man’, ‘The Country House Poem of the Seventeenth Century in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 19 (1956), pp. 159–174, p. 171. For two contrary views, see Leah Marcus who argues that Marvell ‘praises rural retreat only in the process of undoing it’ (p. 241) and that it ‘demonstrates that there can be no such thing as peaceful retirement’ (p. 262) in *The Politics of Mirth: Jonson, Herrick, Milton, Marvell, and the Defense of Old Holiday Pastimes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); and, more recently, Kari Boyd McBride who argues that, in fact, ‘Marvell’s poem represents the *bankruptcy* of the country house discourse’ [my italics], *Country House Discourse*, p. 160.

And with five Bastions it did fence,
As aiming one for ev'ry Sense.
(lines 281–288)¹⁵

This is praise of Fairfax, but praise tinged with a kind of comedy, as the retired general is portrayed, like Sir Toby in Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, as being not just unwilling, but unable to leave his military pursuits behind in his retirement.¹⁶ The rhyme of 'sport' and 'Fort' underlines the potential comedy of the situation, as the military and the non-military (indeed the playful) are rather uncomfortably forced together. Quickly, though, the comedy takes a darker turn, as the garden space itself becomes shot through with the language of war:

When in the *East* the Morning Ray
Hangs out the Colours of the Day,
The Bee through these known Allies hums,
Beating the *Dian* with its *Drumms*.
Then Flow'rs their drowsie Eylids raise,
Their Silken Ensigns each displayes,
And dries its Pan yet dank with Dew,
And fills its Flask with Odours new.
(lines 289–296)

In this stanza, the description of the honed nature of the garden at Nun Appleton is almost entirely military: 'Colours', 'Allies', '*Dian*' (a wake-up call to soldiers), '*Drumms*', 'Ensigns', 'Pan' (part of a gun), and 'Flask' (a gun-powder holder) all denote military objects or activity. There may also be an oblique resonance in the word 'Pan' with 'The Garden', another Marvellian depiction of a garden space. There 'Pan' was a proper noun denoting, as we have seen, one of the most literary of Classical gods; here Pan becomes a lifeless, yet dangerous, military object. There is something deeply unsettling about this kind of thoroughgoing invasion of the language from an unexpected sphere, and this particular sphere—the military—sits very uneasily with the country house genre. It is as if country house poems written before the Civil War, such as Lanyer's 'The Description of Cooke-Ham' (1611),

¹⁵ In the context of the poem, it is not entirely clear whether Marvell refers here directly to Fairfax (his employer) or to one of Fairfax's ancestors. The issues raised, though—regardless of the direct referent of the lines—are of great relevance to Fairfax himself.

¹⁶ Annabel Patterson also makes a comparison between Fairfax and Uncle Toby in *Marvell and the Civic Crown*, p. 95.

Jonson's 'To Penshurst' (1616), or Carew's 'To Saxham' (1640), are being invoked only to be overrun with images of war.¹⁷

The matter quickly becomes more serious still, because it is not only the description of the garden which becomes invaded by the military but also the garden's own actions towards the inhabitants of Nun Appleton:

These, as their *Governour* goes by,
In fragrant Vollyes they let fly;
And to salute their *Governess*
Again as great a charge they press.
(lines 297–300)

Echoing a familiar tradition—the 'pathetic fallacy'—in which country house gardens embrace and actively comfort their owners,¹⁸ this imagines the gardens' actions towards Fairfax and his wife in terms of a military attack ('Vollyes [...] charge [...] press'). The writing, however, hovers between the garden imagery neutralising and beautifying the military imagery (with the emphasis on 'fragrant', say, rather than 'Vollyes') and the reverse, whereby otherwise harmless, pleasurable imagery is spoilt by the military. This linguistic knife-edge continues in the following stanza, which also imagines the garden in terms of military action *against* Fairfax:

Well shot ye Firemen! Oh how sweet,
And round your equal Fires do meet;
Whose shrill report no Ear can tell,
But Ecchoes to the Eye and smell.
See how the Flow'rs, as at *Parade*,
Under their *Colours* stand displaid:
Each *Regiment* in order grows,
That of the Tulip Pinke and Rose.
(lines 305–312)

In each image here, the military imagery might be seen as being undercut and thus balanced by something pleasant. The idea of being 'shot' by the flower-gunmen is ameliorated by the description of this as 'sweet', and the idea of the typically echoing

¹⁷ See also Thomas Corns, who states that: "Upon Appleton House", like Jonson's "To Penshurst" [...] develops praise for the patron through praise for his estate', before going on to point out 'how profoundly recollection of the conflict invades ways of perceiving in rural retirement', *Uncloistered Virtue*, pp. 236, 238.

¹⁸ See, for example, 'The Description of Cookham' by Aemilia Lanyer, in which the birds sing to 'entertaine' their owner (line 30) and the trees turned 'themselves to beauteous Canopies, | To shade the bright Sunne from your brighter eies' (lines 25–26). Quoted from Danielle Clarke (ed.), *Isabella Whitney, Mary Sidney and Aemilia Lanyer: Renaissance Women Poets* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000).

‘report’ of this gun being silent (‘no Ear can tell’) suggests the harmlessness of this particular version of fighting. And the military descriptions of the flower displays might be said to emphasise how well and orderly they are kept rather than *damaging* them through the military association. How we interpret this military invasion of Nun Appleton is, however, crucial to our whole interpretation of the poem. Many critics, following Raymond Williams, have argued that this language effects a ‘mutation into peace’ of military imagery.¹⁹ As Warren Chernaik more expansively puts it: ‘War here has lost its potential destructiveness and become wholly a game [...] Real bullets kill, but the “fragrant Volleys” (line 298) of the flower-troopers are harmless and aesthetically pleasing’.²⁰ But we might put this another way and suggest that war has invaded the garden to the extent that it is no longer possible to describe nature without recourse to military language. Indeed, in the next stanza, the imagery becomes still more dark and worrying:

But when the vigilant *Patroul*
 Of Stars walks round about the *Pole*,
 Their Leaves, that to the stalks are curl’d,
 Seem to their Staves the *Ensigns* furl’d.
 Then in some Flow’rs beloved Hut
 Each Bee as Sentinel is shut;
 And sleeps so too: but, if once stir’d,
 She runs you through, or asks *the Word*.
 (lines 313–320)

Moving away from simply using military imagery to describe nature, this stanza recounts how, at night, the leaves of the flowers actually appear to *be* military ensigns. This forcefully suggests that flowers are not really ensigns, and yet equally forcefully insists that, to this observer’s distorted perception, they *are* ensigns. It is as if the military imagery has now infected not only the way in which it is possible to write about nature, but also the way in which the narrator actually perceives nature itself. John Dixon Hunt argues that at this point in the poem ‘we are [...] meant to be struck by the slight silliness of it all’,²¹ but whilst he is right to note the comic side of this passage, it is dark, rather than silly, comedy, and the horrific nature of what is imagined remains. The image of a bee running ‘you through’ is especially disturbing,

¹⁹ Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1973), p. 56.

²⁰ Chernaik, *The Poet’s Time*, p. 38.

²¹ Andrew Marvell: *His Life and Writings*, p. 100.

as this is not *just* a metaphor, but an extension of what bees really do, extending and darkening the sting of a bee into something far more threatening and even murderous. In this stanza, then, war—having been initially darkly comic, and then an invasive cognitive category by which to describe nature—becomes a threatening and all but real invasion of the garden. The garden is no longer just ‘like’ the world of military action; it somehow *is* a stage of war, in the narrator’s imagination.²²

Marvell quickly makes clear that this is not simply speculation about war in general, or about Fairfax’s own personal military mindset, but that it is relevant to the whole of England, indeed that Nun Appleton acts as a kind of microcosm for the whole country:

Oh Thou, that dear and happy Isle
The Garden of the World ere while,
Thou *Paradise* of four Seas,
Which *Heaven* planted us to please,
But, to exclude the World, did guard
With watry if not flaming Sword;
What luckless Apple did we tast,
To make us Mortal, and The Wast?
(lines 321–328)

This answers the question implicit in the previous stanzas over why military imagery has invaded the garden, by asserting that the Civil War has caused a more general descent into militarism. This stanza sets up England as a place which has a natural, and powerful, defence against military aggression, but that this is a natural advantage which she has squandered in an act of suicidal civil war. England is presented as Eden before the fall, a ‘*Paradise*’ specifically created by God for the pleasure and safety of the English which could only be ruined by an act of supreme folly; such is the folly of this act that Marvell compares it to the original sin of taking the ‘luckless Apple’ in Eden.

The stanzas that follow act as a kind of commentary on what has gone before, and continue the allegory of England as a fallen garden:

Unhappy! shall we never more
That sweet *Militia* restore,
When Gardens only had their Towrs,
And all the Garrisons were Flowrs,

²² This also fits in with Thomas Healy’s argument, in “‘Dark all without it knits’: vision and authority in Marvell’s *Upon Appleton House*”, that the narrator is, in part, the subject of the poem.

When Roses only Arms might bear,
And Men did rosie Garlands wear?
Tulips, in several Colours barr'd,
Were then the *Switzers* of our *Guard*.

The *Gardiner* had the *Souldiers* place,
And his more gentle Forts did trace.
The Nursery of all things green
Was then the only *Magazeen*.
The *Winter Quarters* were the Stoves,
Where he the tender Plants removes.
But War all this doth overgrow:
We Ord'nance Plant and Powder sow.
(lines 329–344)

The invasion of the military imagery into gardens of Nun Appleton here becomes the 'Unhappy' invasion of the military into the whole of England as a result of Civil War. The metaphors in these stanzas work in at least two distinct ways. Most literally, they suggest that, before the Civil War, the military itself did not exist in the same way, and that there *were* more gardeners and fewer soldiers. They also argue, more subtly, that before the Civil War, it was possible to imagine gardens in terms of the military without it having such direct relevance to a self-wounding conflict: we could *then* imagine gardens as having 'Towrs', gardeners building towers and so on, without the connotation of war. The Civil War, to paraphrase George Lakoff, fundamentally changed a metaphor by which England had lived.²³ The idea of the military not just invading the garden (or invading descriptions of it) but actually being planted ('We Ord'nance Plant and Powder sow') underlines the radical conceptual change which the Civil War has effected. Imagining war in terms of plants—a devastating reversal of imagining plants in terms of war—suggests that civil war will be self-perpetuating, and that what England has sown, she will eventually reap with more internecine warfare. These images test all the more severely the views of critics such as Chernaik and Williams who suggest that the house offers a world 'magically exempt [...] from the raging destructiveness

²³ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). In this powerful book, which has been followed up by other important works on metaphor by the authors and others (most importantly Mark Turner), Lakoff and Johnson argue that 'metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature' (p. 3). We are only beginning to understand the huge implications of the work of Lakoff, Johnson and Turner for the study of literature, but this might be a highly productive direction for the future study and understanding of the literature of the Civil War period.

surrounding it',²⁴ for how can any world be truly exempt from this national tragedy?²⁵

Donald M. Friedman suggests another possible solution when he suggests that 'Upon Appleton House' presents a resolution in the poem itself:

We have been given an exhaustive and varied picture of the dangerously disordered state of England and the world; and we have learned something of the 'green' virtues that may redeem them [...] If there is any resolution it is in the metaphors themselves that form the substance of 'Upon Appleton House'.²⁶

Friedman's faith in the redemptive powers of 'Upon Appleton House' itself is linked to his more general faith in a 'point of view shared by Jonson, Carew, Marvell, and Pope' about the value of what he calls the 'country house pastoral' (p. 210). That point of view involves 'simplicity' of manners (in art and literature, as in everyday life) as well as a 'reluctance to compete with the court and the city in pursuit of novelty and extravagance' (p. 210). The penultimate stanza of the poem might lend support to such a view, suggesting that the world of Nun Appleton—both house and poem—may, after all, be exempt from the general post-Civil-War chaos, and even arguing that it provides a model from which the world might right itself:

'Tis not, what is once was, the *World*;
But a rude heap together hurl'd;
All negligently overthrown,
Gulfes, Deserts, Precipices, Stone.
Your lesser *World* contains the same.
But in more decent Order tame;
You Heaven's Center, Nature's Lap.
And Paradise's only Map.
(lines 761–768)

²⁴ Chernaik, *The Poet's Time*, p. 39.

²⁵ Indeed, Derek Hirst and Stephen Zwicker have shown (in their article 'High Summer at Nun Appleton') that Nun Appleton was at the centre, geographically, of military activity still going on at the end of the Civil War. In particular they locate the poem in 'anxious months' (p. 250) in the war with Scotland, when Scottish troops were poised to invade England on a route which would take them close to Nun Appleton. As they go on to argue, at the time of the writing of 'Upon Appleton House', 'Neither radicalism nor war could be confined to the past' (p. 252), and that there were therefore still 'physical dangers' (p. 253) present at Nun Appleton itself. Their reading of the episode quoted above is that 'nostalgia is challenged by a present whose sharp intrusiveness needs to be emphasized' (p. 254). See also Leah Marcus, *The Politics of Mirth*, pp. 244–245, who reads this section of the poem with an emphasis on the idea of war being inescapable.

²⁶ Donald M. Friedman, *Marvell's Pastoral Art*, p. 246. For a similar view see Hodge, *Foreshortened Time*, who talks about the 'house, which [...] represents Art, the ordering power of man' p. 157; and Wallace, who, in a very biographical and affirmative reading argues that 'Lord Fairfax's high standards and his own [Marvell's] were identical, like the house and poem', *Destiny His Choice*, p. 255.

Malcolm Kelsall, along the same lines as Donald Friedman, argues that this ending provides its own literary closure and solution to the problems facing England at this tumultuous time: 'Real life is recalcitrant. Poems, however, move to resolutions, the closure of their themes. The ending here is that, as it were, "given" by the country house tradition. Paradise will be restored.'²⁷ We might argue that the fact that the language of war pervades the poem itself, and the fact that 'Upon Appleton House' sprawls way beyond the scope of the kind of 'country house tradition' Kelsall traces, both count against such an assertion. The poem as it stands refuses to resolve; the Civil War permeates the poem to such an extent that it is not easily forgotten. As well as in the passages already discussed, we might also think of the way in which images and portrayals of death and violence intrude into large sections of the poem. To give just a few examples: the mowers 'Massacre' the grass (line 394), one of them inadvertently making his scythe edge 'all bloody' (line 397) in killing a bird ('the Rail' of line 395) and the scene is later described as a 'Camp of Battail' (line 420) in which 'the Plain | Lyes quilted ore with Bodies slain' (lines 421–422); haystacks are seen to resemble 'the *Roman Camps*' which 'rise | In Hills for Soldiers Obsequies' (lines 439–440); the violent art of bullfighting makes a brief appearance (lines 447–448); the river is imagined to be 'in it self [...] drown'd' (line 471); Marvell's poetic speaker describes himself as having 'incamped' (line 602) his mind in trees, and then the possible violent, military connotations of this word are unlocked with the oxymoronic 'courteous *Briars*' which 'nail me through' (line 616) before he implores nature to 'stake me down' (line 624); and Maria Fairfax is imagined as narrowly avoiding an '*Ambush*' (line 719). These examples hint at the extent to which 'Upon Appleton House' cannot easily be separated from the language of violence which pervades it.

Furthermore, this last stanza itself does not, if we look closely, effect the kind of closure which Kelsall suggests it might. For a start, the 'lesser world' of Nun Appleton 'contains' all of these disruptive forces, but in a more ordered form. The relative language is important to note here—it is '*more* decent [...] tame'—as it argues that the world of Nun Appleton is not, in fact, wholly ordered and peaceful. Also, the initial serene power of imagining Nun Appleton as '*Paradice's only Map*'

²⁷ Kelsall, *The Great Good Place*, p. 56.

might be undermined by an echo of ‘paradise’ previously in the poem, whereby the ‘*Paradise of four Seas*’ (line 323), which England once represented, was lost through civil war. If Nun Appleton is a map of paradise, we must ask whether that paradise is a fallen one: the linguistic evidence of the poem certainly suggests that it is.

Most telling of all, however, is the fact that these lines are not the final ones at all, and that the actual final stanza that follows them proves far less easy to assimilate to a redemptive model of the poem as a whole:

But now the *Salmon-Fishers* moist
Their *Leathern Boats* begin to hoist;
And, like *Antipodes* in Shoes,
Have shod their *Heads* in their *Canoos*.
How *Tortoise like*, but not so slow,
These rational *Amphibii* go?
Let’s in: for the dark *Hemisphere*
Does now like one of them appear.
(lines 769–776)

Despite the statement of certain critics, for example Harold Toliver, that the “‘dark *Hemisphere*’ is not threatening”,²⁸ it seems, on the contrary, to be a rather uncanny, uneasy ending to the poem. Hirst and Zwicker, aptly describe the ‘cosmic menace’²⁹ of the final couplet, and also the ‘indecision, uncertainty and foreboding’ of this final stanza as a whole. This is apt, and it might also be added that this stanza creates its own tricky interpretative problems. We might, for example, detect a hint of the previous imagery of a world turned upside down in the image of the upturned boats, and the way in which the people are described in terms of exotic animal life is, to say the least, strange. Moreover, it might be said to re-animate the previous unsettling imagery of natural disturbance in the poem in which, for example, ‘Men like Grashoppers appear | But Grashoppers are Gyants there’ (line 371). This comparison perhaps alludes to the story, recounted in Numbers, of how some Israelites were put off going into the Promised Land because the men there were ‘giants [...] and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers’.³⁰ Marvell takes the biblical idea further, not just suggesting that men appear to be the size of grasshoppers, but that grasshoppers themselves have grown to gigantic proportions; unlike in the Bible where the

²⁸ Marvell’s *Ironic Vision*, p. 129.

²⁹ ‘High Summer at Nun Appleton’, p. 262.

³⁰ Numbers 13. 33. All quotations from the Bible will be from the Authorised King James version.

comparison works towards a proportional understanding, albeit a terrifying one, Marvell's grasshoppers leave the reader perplexed.³¹ Does Marvell re-animate these kinds of worries and oddities, even as he appears to offer a ringing, conclusive, end to his poem? As we read the end of this poem we might also ask what, precisely, the 'dark *Hemisphere*' looks like, if it looks like one of the boat-headed salmon fishers? Can we really imagine them clearly? Alternatively, is Marvell suggesting that the sky looks like the dark interior of an upturned boat? In that case, the reader is being asked to place themselves in the position of the salmon fishers, and this might be a highly uncertain position to be in, rather than one of conclusive omnipotence. Marvell lulls us into thinking that this image does its work, and allows us to think about the night sky more powerfully, but the image fails in this conventional sense, leaving us perplexed, rather than enforcing for us an idea that we are able clearly to understand. The uncertainty of this simile is underlined by its expression in a final, falling, three-syllable rhyme ('*Hemisphere* [...] them appear')—what would once have been termed a 'feminine' rhyme—which adds to the conceptual uncertainty a palpable sense of deflation; the poem does not so much ring out its conclusion, as fall flat.

'Upon Appleton House', then, ultimately fails to provide the kinds of straightforward answers that some critics have looked for; we might say, rather, that the poem represents a penetrating commentary on the confusions created by the Civil War's permeation of literature. This is not, as A.D. Cousins suggests, a *political* reversal of a genre through civil war, but rather that the Civil War results, for Marvell, in an undermining of a once proportional and proper *literary* mode. In this way, the poem is a good example of what Nigel Smith has called a revolution in a genre; in this case it is a revolution which has overthrown an old literary order, but which, alarmingly, does not present a working alternative. 'Upon Appleton House' represents an exploration of the extent to which the Civil War has infected and changed writing, making it more or less impossible to write in the old ways; but the alternative writerly models which are proposed are repeatedly, and relentlessly, found wanting.

³¹ Grasshoppers are used several times in the Bible to suggest large numbers, but Marvell presumably enters into dialogue with other instances, as in Numbers—and also in Isaiah, when God is imagined to sit 'upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers' (40. 22)—when they are used, creatively, for their small size in relation to men.

3. Marvell and Cromwell in the Interregnum

If the Civil War was more or less over after the King's execution, the difficulties for writers were most certainly not, and Marvell's poems to Cromwell demonstrate how the legacy of the Civil War, and the problems for writing it created, continued and even intensified during the Interregnum. Marvell's most interesting exploration of the figure of Cromwell comes in 'An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return From Ireland', which I discuss at length in Chapter 6 below, but the two other Cromwell poems pose their own thorny questions about how to write about this hugely successful and terrifying man. In their aforementioned article on 'Upon Appleton House', Hirst and Zwicker note (following a long tradition of criticism) the 'sharp turn between *Upon Appleton House* and the sequence which runs from *The First Anniversary*, through *A Poem on the Death of O.C.* to the Restoration satires', going on to argue that 'The completeness with which this instinctual philosopher came to abandon his speculation is incontestable'.³² A close look at Marvell's poems to Cromwell, however, reveals that these two poems, in their explorations of writing and politics, do not represent such a 'sharp turn'.

Published anonymously in 1655, but written in December of 1654, 'The First Anniversary of the Government under O.C.' begins with a typically Marvellian meditation on the fallible nature of humankind:

Like the vain Curlings of the Watry maze,
Which in smooth streams a sinking Weight does raise;
So Man, declining always, disappears
In the weak Circles of increasing Years;
And his short Tumults of themselves Compose,
While flowing Time above his Head does close.
Cromwell alone with greater Vigour runs,
(Sun-like) the Stages of succeeding Suns.
(lines 1–8)

³² 'High Summer at Nun Appleton', p. 264. They go on to argue for a consistency in Marvell's work which stems from a sensitivity to his various patrons, an argument which seems, for many reasons, rather unconvincing. This argument also signals a return to a rather more conventional and safe reading of 'Upon Appleton House' itself which becomes a poem 'within which Fairfax might take moral shelter' (p. 266) and that ultimately 'makes sublime—for strategic as well as aesthetic reasons—the imperfections and contingencies of the world' (p. 269). In a push for Marvellian consistency, then, Hirst and Zwicker, for all their obvious subtlety and insight, end up straining and oversimplifying the complex meanings of the poem.

These lines tally with Marvell's perennial suspicions that mankind's efforts are ultimately 'vain', and Marvell frequently associates the word 'vain' with writing, suggesting that the written word might indirectly be at issue here.³³ Indeed, although the idea of water composing itself might seem rather odd, this makes more sense if we detect a double meaning in 'Compose' such that it refers to written (as well as musical) creation.³⁴ In this reading, human writings are like 'the vain Curlings of the Watry maze' which disappear soon after they are made. The uselessness of this 'ordinary' human composition (associated also with 'heavy Monarchs' in line 15) is further contrasted to Cromwell's *super*-human ability:

Thus (Image-like) an useless time they tell,
And with vain Scepter, strike the hourly Bell;
Nor more contribute to the state of Things,
Then wooden Heads unto the Viols strings.
While indefatigable *Cromwell* hies,
And cuts his way still nearer to the Skyes,
Learning a Musique in the Region clear,
To tune this lower to that higher Sphere.
(lines 41–48)

Monarchs, like ordinary mortals, are 'useless' and 'vain' (that word again), whilst Cromwell accomplishes something which is superior to mortal achievement, existing in a privileged position beyond vanity, somewhat like that which Marvell later reserves for Milton. It is again telling that the metaphors Marvell uses are musical: Cromwell's abilities manifest themselves, in Marvell's metaphorical schema, as extraordinary artistic skills. Ordinary mortals 'compose' only for the river of time to destroy their work; Cromwell creates something far more permanent. In this, we might detect something of Marvell's characteristic self-deprecation, as if he is protesting that his own poem will itself—being of a mortal rather than an eternal kind—not live up to Cromwell's own super-human ability.

Later in the poem, the contrast between Cromwell's superhuman 'art' and that of the poem itself is made more explicit:

³³ See, for example 'The Garden' and 'On *Paradise Lost*' for close associations of vanity and the written word. Also, 'On the Victory obtained by Blake over the Spaniards' contains the line 'Forces and art, she soon will feel, are vain' (line 49).

³⁴ The word 'compose' was certainly associated with literary composition in the period; the *OED* cites the meaning 'To construct (in words); to make or produce in literary form, to write as an author' (5) as early as 1483.

Unhappy Princes, ignorantly bred,
By Malice some, by Errour more misled;
If gracious Heaven to my Life give length,
Leisure to Time, and to my Weakness Strength,
Then shall I once with graver Accents shake
Your Regal sloth, and your long Slumbers wake:
Like the shrill Huntsman that prevents the East,
Winding his Horn to Kings that chase the Beast.
Till then my Muse shall hollow far behind
Angelique *Cromwell* who outwings the wind.
(lines 117–126)

Marvell initially imagines for his poetry a Cromwell-like vigour and power, a mode of writing which would be a wake-up call to the slothful monarchs of the wider world. As is the case at another important moment in the poem, though, the tentative 'If' (line 119) is key, and this powerful vision is quickly revealed to be something of an impossible imagining. Marvell's poetic speaker cannot, at present, turn his 'Weakness' into 'Strength', and must instead 'hollow far behind' Cromwell. Indeed, the poetic speaker, in the following (and perhaps most famous) section of the poem, undermines his own ability to see clearly at all:

Hence oft I think, if in some happy Hour
High Grace should meet in one with highest Pow'r,
And then a seasonable People still
Should bend to his, as he to Heavens will,
What we might hope, what wonderful Effect
From such a wish'd Conjuncture might reflect.
Sure, the mysterious Work, where none withstand,
Would forthwith finish under such a Hand:
Fore-shortned Time its useless Course would stay,
And soon precipitate the latest Day.
But a thick Cloud about that Morning lyes,
And intercepts the Beams of Mortal eyes,
That 'tis the most which we determine can,
If these the Times, then this must be the Man.
(lines 131–144)

The two 'ifs' in this passage are crucial and they upset what would otherwise be an extremely affirmative and positive vision of both poetry and politics. Nevertheless, contextual critics have read this passage as a clear indicating admiration for Cromwell, and also the moment at which Marvell 'comes out' as a properly political, polemical poet. A good indication of this is the fact that the phrase 'Fore-shortned

Time' was used by one such critic as an affirmative book title.³⁵ Read in the context of Marvell's ongoing questionings of writing, however, these lines seem urgent and relevant for a different reason: they continue Marvell's radically questioning attitude towards writing and its ability accurately to comprehend and to make comprehensible earth-shattering events. Yet again, the possibility of writing being an accurate and powerful tool is undermined, in this case by a 'thick Cloud' that 'intercepts the Beams of Mortal eyes'. Writing is not dismissed, as the poem goes on attempting to write about Cromwell, but at the same time it insists on the difficulty of its relationship to the tumultuous events it describes.

The concluding section of the poem involves a speech put into the mouth of an outside observer who wonders how England is so prosperous after the Civil War and war with Holland. The speaker of this panegyric to England, despite an underlying hostility to the country, has to admit England's huge current success. That speech concludes with the suggestion 'let them write his Praise that love him best, | It grieves me sore to have thus much confest' (lines 393–394). This seems initially to be a neat literary trick which sets up lines of even more fulsome praise from Marvell in his own voice. The logic, in other words, prepares the reader to hear still more excessive praise from Marvell himself who, we might assume, loves Cromwell 'best'. The ending as Marvell wrote it, however, is more complex:

Pardon, great Prince, if thus their Fear or Spight
More then our Love and Duty do thee Right.
I yield, nor further will the Prize contend;
So that we both alike may miss our End:
While thou thy venerable Head dost raise
As far above their Malice as my Praise.
And as the *Angel* of our Commonweal,
Troubling the Waters, yearly mak'st them Heal.
(lines 395–402)

³⁵ R.I.V. Hodge, *Foreshortened Time: Andrew Marvell and Seventeenth Century Revolutions*. Hodge's book provides much useful contextual information for Marvell studies, but the use made of this particular phrase in the title is misleading, and this is illustrated by an explanation given for the title in the book's introduction. There, Hodge argues that Marvell himself saw into (distinctly Whig sounding) historical processes 'which may not become dominant and recognizable for centuries. In Marvell's words, "foreshortened time the work of ages acts"' (p. 6). These are indeed Marvell's words, but Marvell did not say them in that order. In fact, Cromwell, 'in one Year the work of Ages acts' (in line 14 of 'The First Anniversary'), and Marvell states that 'Fore-shortned Time its useless Course would stay' much later (line 139) in the poem. The spliced quotation makes Marvell sound far more affirmative than he actually is. Also, in 'The First Anniversary' itself, the latter words are bounded by a significant 'if' before and, after them, the deflating 'But a thick Cloud', which intercepts human judgement thus rendering certainty impossible.

The 'Pardon' of line 395 is, of course, disingenuous, as Marvell (though in the voice of a foreign observer) has himself written the opinion of Cromwell just expressed. Again, we might think that this is a trick by which Marvell can set his own efforts of eulogy against the flattering but inadequate praises of the foreigner. The following lines, though, buck this expectation and in fact amount to a typically Marvellian apology for the inadequacy of his writing. Instead of setting his own work against the spiteful foreigners, he makes his own and their failures 'alike', and sets Cromwell himself 'far above [...] Praise'. The final couplet has a sting in its tail, as although Cromwell is cast as an invincible healer of war wounds, there is also a suggestion that he is the perpetrator of these wounds in the first place. This is something of a return to the final lines of 'An Horatian Ode' which warn that 'the same *Arts*' which Cromwell used to seize power are now essential to political survival. Here the idea is taken further and Marvell also suggests that the '*Angel* of our Commonweal' does not just heal England's wounds but is involved in the 'Troubling the Waters' which led to those wounds in the first place. More worryingly still, the process is portrayed, through using the present continuous tense, and by setting up the idea of inevitable regularity with the word 'yearly', as one which will go on indefinitely. So at the end of this poem, as Cromwell himself apparently rises above either malice or praise, searching questions are asked about the extent to which he himself is the nation's problem. The ending of 'The First Anniversary', then, both figures writing as inadequate to praise or to express Cromwell's nature—thereby undermining its own efficacy and power—and at the same time balances this determined inadequacy against Cromwell and *his* terrifying power.

Oliver Cromwell did, of course, despite hopes and predictions to the contrary, prove mortal, and when he died Marvell wrote an elegy, 'A Poem upon the Death of O.C.', in his honour. The opening of that poem is heavily indebted to 'An Horatian Ode', and in some ways represents a completion of the issues raised there: 'An Horatian Ode' asked searching questions about how lasting Cromwell's success could be, and now Cromwell had answered those questions with his astonishing achievements. On Cromwell's death, however, the world must have again looked like an extremely uncertain place, and Marvell seems only fully to invest in Cromwell as a memory, something which has now passed. Although in political terms the

Cromwell elegy is relatively straightforward, it is experimental and questioning as a poem. Far longer than any of Marvell's previous elegies, it strives—or, rather, tentatively gropes—towards an appropriate mode in which to elegise Cromwell, testing and rejecting various elegiac models as Marvell tries, once again, to represent Cromwell in writing.

It begins with an echo of the scene in 'An Horatian Ode' in which Charles is portrayed as the 'Royal Actor', around whom the regicides 'clap their bloody hands':

The People, which what most they fear esteem,
Death when more horrid so more noble deem;
And blame the last *Act*, like *Spectators* vain,
Unless the *Prince* whom they applaud be slain.
Nor fate indeed can well refuse that right
To those that liv'd in War, to dye in Fight.
(lines 7–12)

As in the Villiers elegy, Marvell seems to put part of the blame for the death in question on observers—in this case the '*Spectators* vain'—who watch from a safe distance. Here the particular kind of safe distance imagined is that of a theatre audience who, in half longing for the tragic hero to die, become complicit in the eventual death. Early in the poem, then, the issue of art is explicitly raised in relation to Cromwell's death, and the role of art—in this case theatrical art—comes under hostile scrutiny. Later, Cromwell's own dying groans are deemed to be superior to any elegiac art:

Each Groan he doubled and each Sigh he sigh'd,
Repeated over to the restless Night.
No trembling String compos'd to numbers new,
Answers the touch in Notes more sad more true.
(lines 57–60)

Again, then, elegiac art is set against almost impossibly high standards and found wanting. Even if the poetic 'numbers' sung for Cromwell are original, they will inevitably be inferior to Cromwell's own dying elegies for himself which, though infinitely 'sad', are powerful and true. But Cromwell is not only imagined as outdoing his own elegists he is also, later in the poem, seen as being so great as to engulf all previous legend:

Who planted *England* on the *Flandrick* shoar,
And stretch'd *our* frontire to the *Indian Ore*;

Whose greater *Truths* obscure the *Fables* old,
Whether of British Saints or Worthy's told;
And in a valour less'ning *Arthur's* deeds,
For Holyness the *Confessor* exceeds.
(lines 173–178)

Cromwell's military conquests are compared, in an extraordinary imaginative move, to his effective colonising of Britain's '*Fables* old': Marvell contests that such is Cromwell's staggering achievement, he makes the legendary deeds of King Arthur and Edward the Confessor seem less significant. So Marvell presents his readers with a figure who surpasses his own elegists, and who engulfs his own national myths. Although, in comparison to 'An Horatian Ode' this is a Cromwell whom Marvell unequivocally supports politically, he still, even in death (perhaps especially in death) tests poetic art to its limits. For if Cromwell takes over all possible writing and mythology, then what is left to write about him? After a section detailing some of Cromwell's achievements, the poem effectively gives up, both semantically and metrically, at the imagined sight of Cromwell's corpse:

I saw him dead, a leaden slumber lyes,
And mortal sleep over those wakefull eyes:
Those gentle rays under the lids were fled,
Which through his looks that piercing sweetnesse shed;
That port which so majestique was and strong,
Loose and depriv'd of vigour, stretch'd along:
All witherer'd, all discolour'd, pale and wan,
How much another thing, no more that man?
Oh! humane glory, vaine, oh! death, oh! wings,
Oh! worthlesse world! oh transitory things!
(lines 247–256)

This charts the extraordinary moment of confrontation between Marvell and Cromwell's dead body, and registers the inexpressible disjunction between Cromwell as a super-human, almost immortal, unstoppable force, (the 'three-fork'd Lightning [...] burning through the Air' of 'An Horatian Ode'), and a discoloured, lifeless corpse. The extremity of this disjunction almost causes a complete breakdown in the poem's control, an extraordinary moment for Marvell, who is usually so strict with himself in terms of poetic form.³⁶ The stress pattern becomes entirely irregular, as

³⁶ M.L. Donnelly, in "And still new stopps to various time apply'd": Marvell, Cromwell, and the Problem of Representation at Midcentury' in Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (eds), *On the Celebrated and Neglected Poems of Andrew Marvell* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1992), pp. 154–168, is right to suggest that 'finding the right words to cover the departure of such a

punctuation and exclamations cut across the iambic rhythm; in fact it becomes difficult to voice these lines at all, as if to enact the fact that the death of Cromwell is all but unspeakable. Even the lineation itself threatens to fail—and so the poetry to fall into prose—as the almost incoherent ‘wings, | Oh!’ cuts rudely across the line division.

But is it really a complete breakdown of poetic form? The final couplet, if not metrically correct, does rhyme, and there is a jarring disjunction between the desperate gesture indicated by the sense of ‘vain [...] transitory things’, and the sound of its rhyme with ‘wings’. These lines both disconcert and reassure at the same time, arguing that after the death of Cromwell there is no poetry, just as they themselves keep to a basic poetic form. Unlike the Hastings elegy, which tactfully enacts its own command to be silent in the face of death, this long elegiac tribute continues beyond this crisis and finds a way to articulate sorrow in language. Moreover, a few lines later, Marvell imagines a new and affirmative role for poetry about Cromwell:

Thee, many ages hence, in martial verse
Shall th’English souldier, ere he charge, rehearse;
Singing of thee, inflame themselves to fight,
And with the name of Cromwell, armyes fright [...]
As long as future time succeeds the past,
Always thy honour, praise, and name, shall last.
(lines 277–280, 285–286)

This is somewhat reminiscent of Marvell’s earlier elegy to Villiers, in that action is deemed to be superior to writing, yet this time it is an image of a soldier-poet which is preferred to the despairing observer. Marvell proposes a new kind of militarist poetry, to be sung by soldiers, which might prove so potent that it helps to win battles. Yet this is something of a false dawn, because the elegy goes on to undermine this powerful model of Cromwellian poetry.³⁷ Having imagined Cromwell in a place

figure from the stage is no easy task’ (p. 168), but is questionable in suggesting that nevertheless ‘Marvell gamely tries’ (p. 168) to do so. I shall argue that, as in the Hastings elegy, Marvell makes the inadequacy of words his subject, which is very different from ‘gamely’ trying but failing to find the words. This latter implies a rather hapless Marvell who would not be as worthy of our attention as he in fact is.

³⁷ Patsy Griffin, in her book *The Modest Ambition of Andrew Marvell* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1995), does not notice the temporary nature of this clarity when she states that ‘Marvell’s perspective is superb: he understood well that Cromwell had not yet been correctly viewed, that time would refine his image’ (p. 157). Similarly, in discussing the passage beginning ‘I saw him

‘farre beyond the sphere’ (line 287), and praised, again, his superhuman achievements, the poem cuts back on itself, moving from Cromwell in heaven back down to earth:

And in those joyes dost spend the endlesse day,
Which in expressing, we ourselves betray.
For we, since thou art gone, with heavy doome,
Wander like ghosts about thy loved tombe;
And lost in tears, have neither sight nor mind
To guide us upward through this region blinde.
(lines 297–302)

This seems very far from the imagined soldiers frightening opposing armies with poetry inspired by Cromwell, and instead reveals genuine anxiety about the future. Cromwell’s elegists no longer go forth and assert Cromwell’s name, but they ‘betray’ themselves with their own pointless, lost, and ghost-like wanderings. The idea of Marvell and other elegists having ‘neither sight nor mind’ recalls the uncertainties of ‘The First Anniversary’ and suggests that the confusion, which Cromwell himself had the potential to dispel, has returned. There follows an uneasy approval of Richard Cromwell’s rule, but it strikes a less than assured note, contrasting, as it does, Richard’s ‘milder’ (line 307) virtues to his father’s stormy success; this is a relatively uncertain prophecy, and the overriding sense of this poem as a whole is confused perplexity, for the reader as much as for Marvell. In this poem, and in ‘The First Anniversary’, Marvell posits a number of different models for understanding Cromwell, and for representing him in writing, but none of them prove assured or sustainable.

4. Marvell as Civil War Historian

Marvell’s intense engagement with problems of writing about and after the Civil War did not by any means end with Oliver Cromwell’s death. As we have seen in Chapter 2, Marvell’s Restoration work *The Rehearsal Transpros’d* constitutes something of a vexed essay on the problems of writing prose satire, apparently worrying about its own oppositional mode of writing almost as much as it attacks Samuel Parker’s writing. It is, however, more directly relevant here, as it is itself a history of the Civil

dead’ (line 247 onwards) she does not quote the lines in which poetic order somewhat breaks down,

War, and represents Marvell's most extended meditation on the issues surrounding the war through which he lived. A certain amount of background is necessary in order to discuss this work at length, and the story starts in the late 1660s. At that time, Marvell was gaining a public reputation as a defender of religious toleration, whilst Samuel Parker published a series of anti-dissenter publications. When, in 1672, Samuel Parker published 'A Preface Shewing What Grounds there are of Fears and Jealousies of Popery', (published as a preface to Bishop Bramhall's *Vindication of Himself and the Episcopal Clergy from the Presbyterian Charge of Popery*), Marvell was, as his editor puts it, 'finally goaded [...] into action',³⁸ specifically, into publishing *The Rehearsal Transpros'd*. Drawing on Buckingham's popular play of the preceding year *The Rehearsal* Marvell caricatures Parker as 'Bayes', the play's absurdly self-aggrandising protagonist.³⁹ By undermining Parker in this way, Marvell sought to gain ground against the increasingly powerful forces within the Church of England and beyond which were aggressively opposed to religious toleration of dissenters. Marvell was thus able to frame his work as being in support of Charles II, and in particular his Declaration of Indulgence of 1672, which attempted, abortively as it turned out, to end the persecution of dissenters. The sticking point was, of course, the question of which 'dissenters' were to be tolerated: Charles and Parker wanted toleration to be extended to Catholics, Marvell and others argued for the toleration of Puritans.

Marvell was hugely successful in his attack on Parker, to the extent that even supporters of Parker seemed to agree that 'M[aster] M[arvell] hath much the advantage in the Reproaching part'.⁴⁰ Clearly, then, in the contest between Marvell and Parker, as Anthony à Wood asserts, 'the odds and victory lay on Marvell's side'.⁴¹ Here, then, we seem to have a work which fits perfectly with Annabel Patterson's assertion that Marvell wrote 'far from lukewarm, often witty, and

and so is able confidently to conclude that: 'Cromwell shows greater in death than life' (p. 157).

³⁸ 'Introduction' in Smith, *R.T.*, p. xii.

³⁹ Marvell makes the relation between the two clear early on, stating that: 'Mr. Bayes and he do very much Symbolize; in their understandings, in their expressions, in their humour, in their contempt and quarrelling of all others, though of their own Profession' (p. 9).

⁴⁰ Joseph Glanvill, quoted in Elizabeth Story Donno (ed.), *Andrew Marvell: The Critical Heritage*, p. 42.

⁴¹ Donno, *The Critical Heritage*, p. 53. *The Rehearsal Transpros'd* also enormously impressed both Rochester and Swift.

therefore *effective* pamphlets',⁴² and supports many other such claims that Marvell wrote in an affirmative political fashion. Indeed, *The Rehearsal Transpros'd* has been central to attempts by critics of the contextual revolution to rescue Marvell from the reputation for political neutrality and reassess him as a politically effective writer. Partly as a result of this polemic urgency, critics have often been too quick to point out the admirable politics of the work, but have been less alert to the complex explorations in which Marvell engages.⁴³ Indeed, the work might well constitute Marvell's most extended and considered meditation on the act of writing, and in particular on the relationship between writing and Civil War politics.

Marvell's account of the Civil War and his narrative of the events leading up to the war begins with a description of the increasing ceremony of the Church of England in the 1630s, and its consequences:

And though these things were very uncouth to *English* Protestants, who naturally affect a plainness of fashion, especially in sacred things [...] But many of these Additions, and to be sure, all that had any colour of Law, were so imposed and prest upon others, that a great part of the Nation was e'n put as it were to fine and ransom upon this account.⁴⁴

The argument here is effective because it moves from the rather casual description of the problems with ceremony, which is 'uncouth' to the plain style of English Protestants, (as if this is something not to their taste, but not of any great consequence), to the far more disturbing idea of these things—which should, by Marvell's implication, be purely a matter of personal choice—being 'prest' upon the Protestants. The pitch of the argument is raised still further by the incredulous 'e'n put as it were to fine and ransom', implying that such a thing is self-evidently

⁴² 'Marvell and Secret History', p. 25.

⁴³ It seems, in fact, that critics rarely conclude accounts of this work without making sweeping, and sometimes rather bland, statements about Marvell's admirable politics. For example, Jon Parkin concludes that Marvell had 'a deep seated disgust at the political power of organised religion' and that this explains his 'case for toleration' given in *The Rehearsal Transpros'd* in 'Liberty Transpros'd: Andrew Marvell and Samuel Parker' in Warren Chernaik and Martin Dzelzainis (eds), *Marvell and Liberty*, pp. 269–289, p. 283; Neil Keeble states that Parker's style 'revealed a political and religious commitment inimical to the freedom of the subject' in 'Why Transpose *The Rehearsal*?' in Warren Chernaik and Martin Dzelzainis (eds), *Marvell and Liberty*, pp. 249–268, p. 263; Dan Jaeckle, describes Marvell's 'goal' in writing to be 'a general reduction in the oppressiveness of power' in 'De-Authorizing in Marvell's "The Rehearsal Transpros'd"' in *John Donne Journal* 10 (1991), pp. 129–142, p. 136; and Jennifer Chibnall asserts Marvell's 'noble generosity' before concluding that Marvell thought that 'to be tolerant is better and safer than to be fearful and intolerant, and that the state should be governed upon that principle' in "Something to the Purpose": Marvell's Rhetorical Strategy in "The Rehearsal Transpros'd" (1672)' in *Prose Studies* 9 (1986), pp. 80–104, p. 102.

⁴⁴ Smith, *R.T.*, pp. 131–132.

absurd. A little later, Marvell continues in this argumentative vein, documenting the direct causes of the Civil War:

For now was come the last part of the *Archbishops* indiscretion; who having strained those strings so high here, and all at the same time, which no wise man ever did; he moreover had a mind to try the same dangerous Experiment in *Scotland*, and sent thither the Book of the *English Liturgy*, to be imposed upon them. What followed thereupon, is yet within the compass of most Mens memories. (pp. 134–135)

The key word here is ‘thereupon’, implying a causal link between the Archbishop’s behaviour and ‘what followed’: the Anglo-Catholics caused the Civil War through the imposition of the prayer book. Marvell makes this seem like indisputable logic, as if ‘most men’ would be able to agree on this.⁴⁵ At the centre of the causes of war is, however, a ‘Book’, and so in this way writing, particularly in its intimate relationship with forms of worship, becomes a source of political and physical danger. The immediately following section describes that war, and attempts a summary:

And how the War broke out, and then to be sure Hell’s broke loose. Whether it were a War of Religion, or of Liberty, is not worth the labour to enquire. Which-soever was at the top, the other was at the bottom; but upon considering all, I think the Cause was too good to have been fought for. Men ought to have trusted God; they ought and might have trusted the King with that whole matter. The *Arms of the Church are Prayers and Tears*, the Arms of the Subjects are Patience and Petitions. The King himself being of so accurate and piercing a judgment, would soon have felt where it stuck. For men may spare their pains where Nature is at work, and the world will not go the faster for our driving. Even as his present Majesties happy Restauration did itself, so all things else happen in their best and proper time, without need of our officiousness.⁴⁶

The assertion that it ‘is not worth the labour to enquire’ might seem strange, given that Marvell *has* just laboured to enquire and posited the clear hypothesis that the war was one related to religion, and to the written text by which religion was practised. However, this is characteristic of his style of argument in the work generally: he crafts an argument carefully and subtly, apparently leaving the reader room to disagree, but then undercuts the seriousness of that argument with an apparently off-hand comment. The argument here would be very difficult to dispute, because

⁴⁵ Similarly, in ‘An Account of the Growth of Popery’, Marvell lists the ‘ill examples and consequences of Popery’ in England, and includes amongst these things: ‘what they contributed to the Civil War in England’ (Grosart IV, pp. 258–259), again (this time obliquely) laying blame for the war on Catholics.

⁴⁶ Smith, *R.T.*, p. 135.

Marvell has made his point powerfully and then shut the door on further enquiry. Yet it is important not to over-read Marvell's commitment to the dissenters. He is clear in his assertion that despite his passionate objection to the imposition of religious conformity through the prayer book, this could not justify going to war. His formulation—'the Cause was too good to have been fought for'—is telling. This is often taken, like his denial of association with the Interregnum rule, as track covering: he was in favour of the war, the argument goes, but does not want fully to admit it post-Restoration. But Marvell's argument as it stands is powerful: to go to war over this cause was to cheapen it, or even to betray it. Thus Marvell seems to blame equally those who gave cause to fight and those who actually took up arms. Moreover, civil war for Marvell ('Hell's broke loose') is a truly terrifying event, one which might have endless and unknown repercussions—Marvell, like Hobbes, views civil war as a kind of '*Death*' of the country.⁴⁷ If Marvell had an almost superstitious uneasiness about the consequences of England having fought a civil war, the blame for that war is subtly dual. The initial fault is committed by those who attempted to force religious conformity (the 'English Liturgy') on an unwilling populace. At the root of this problem was, then, a text (the book of Common Prayer), and one which was at fault partly because it was written in the wrong style. Marvell argues that failing to take account of the fact the English people 'naturally affect a plainness of fashion especially in sacred things', might result in severe civil trouble, and even war.

This religio-literary reading of history, of course, has very serious implications for the 'present' of 1672, because Marvell hears echoes, in Parker's attacks on the Declaration of Indulgence, of the intolerance which, in Marvell's view, led to the Civil War. Early in *The Rehearsal Transpros'd I*, he makes this explicit when he describes Parker as one 'who shall strive to put the World into Blood, and animate Princes to be the Executioners of their own Subjects for well-doing'.⁴⁸ 'Putting the world into blood' is precisely what Marvell saw those conformist clergy do in the 1630s, by trying to force the prayer book on an unwilling population. In this way, it becomes crucial for Marvell to argue for his version of Civil War history, because he sees the same events about to recur in England in the 1670s. He makes

⁴⁷ Richard Tuck (ed.), *Thomas Hobbes: Leviathan*, p. 9.

⁴⁸ Smith, *R.T.*, p. 23.

this even clearer when he states that the events of the Civil War should serve as 'Sea-marks unto wise Princes to avoid the Causes' (p. 135). So in *The Rehearsal Transpros'd* Marvell lays the blame for the start of the Civil War on those, like Parker, who refused to tolerate other forms of worship.

Importantly, however, if the Civil War itself was precipitated by the imposition of a piece of writing (the prayer book), then the fact that, as Marvell sees it, England is again heading towards civil strife, is blamed on the writing of those such as Parker, not just Parker's ideas, but the style of his writing itself.⁴⁹ In this way, then, Marvell's religio-political quarrel with Parker becomes one which is simultaneously, and crucially, a literary quarrel.⁵⁰ Illustrative of this is a passage towards the end of the first part of *The Rehearsal Transpros'd*, in which Marvell sums up his reasons for writing his treatise:

First of all, I was offended at the presumption and arrogance of his stile; whereas there is nothing either of Wit, or Eloquence in all his Books, worthy of a Readers, and more unfit for his own, taking notice of. Then, his infinite *Tautology* was burdensome. (p. 142)

The fact that the first two reasons Marvell gives for writing are stylistic rather than religious or political insists that written style is a serious issue: for Marvell as for Jonson—a figure much invoked in both *The Rehearsal Transpros'd* and *The Rehearsal* itself—'language most shows a man'.⁵¹ Marvell's view of language as fundamental—as opposed to it being superficial or something one can 'get beyond'—is more generally resonant with the thinking Ben Jonson:

No glass renders a man's form or likeness so true as his speech. Nay, it is likened to a man; and as we consider feature and composition in a man, so words in language [...] Some men are tall and big, so some language is high and great [...] Some are little and dwarfs; so of speech, it is humble and low, the words poor and flat. (pp. 574–575)⁵²

⁴⁹ See also *An Account of the Growth of Popery, and Arbitrary Government in England* for an attack on, and a warning of the dangers of, the peremptory imposition of religious, but non-scriptural, writing. Marvell warns of trouble 'wheresoever either the Magistrate, or the Clergy, or the people [...] gratify their ambition, their profit, of their phansie by a text improved or misapplied [...] though against the consent, sense and immutable precepts of Scripture' (Grosart IV, p. 281)

⁵⁰ See also John Wallace, who states that: 'The literary origins of Marvell's quarrels are [...] apparent' in *Destiny His Choice*, p. 192.

⁵¹ Ian Donaldson (ed.), *The Oxford Authors: Ben Jonson*, p. 574.

⁵² Jonson's *Discoveries* is, of course, a tissue of quotation and re-working of classical sources, and this particular passage comes from Erasmus, and it is possible that Marvell also knew the source text: see C.H. Herford, Percy and Evelyn Simpson (eds), *Ben Jonson*, 11 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), XI, p. 272. Marvell's thinking on the symbiotic relationship between political decline and decline in

The analogy here is with what is perhaps the usual way of imagining people, through visual appearance. Jonson suggests we should judge people in this same detailed and nuanced way, but through their words, rather than their outward physical show.

Marvell makes a similar move when he suggests an analogy between the symptoms of sexual disease and linguistic corruption:

You see what a man may come to with Divinity and High-feeding. There is a scurvy disease, which though some derive from *America*, others tell a story that the *Genoueses* in their Warres with *Venice* took some of their Noblemen, whom they cut to pieces and barrel'd up like Tunny, and so maliciously vented it to the *Venetians*, who eating it ignorantly, broke out in those nasty botches and ugly symptoms, that are not curable but by Mercury. What I relate it for is out of no further intention, nor is there any more similitude than that the Mind too hath its Nodes sometimes, and the Stile its Buboës, and that I doubt before Mr. *Bayes* can be rid of 'm, he must pass through the Grand Cure and a dry Diet.⁵³

Although Marvell, particularly in the Second Part of *The Rehearsal Transpros'd*, makes much of his own implication that Parker is suffering from (sometimes venereal) disease, this instance should not be confused with those, largely scurrilous, comic, passages. Here, disease is used, rather, as a metaphor for thinking about language. Like Jonson, Marvell implies that we 'see' a person far more accurately through the 'Stile' of their words than by any other means: language *most* shows a man. For Marvell, the words themselves, not a prior 'disease' indicated by the words, are the problem for which Parker must seek a 'Grand Cure'.

This issue recurs throughout *The Rehearsal Transpros'd*: at one point Marvell states that 'our Author speaks the language of a Lover, and so may claim some pardon, if the habit and excess of his Courtship do as yet give a tincture to his discourse upon more ordinary Subjects' (p. 13). At another he sums up Parker's description of Bishop Bramhall as follows:

By the Language he seems to transcribe out of the *Grand-Cyrus* and *Cassandra*, but the Exploits to have borrowed out of the *Knight of the Sun*, and *King Arthur*. For in a luscious and effeminate Stile he gives him [Bishop Bramhall] such a *Termagent* character, as must either fright or turn the stomach of any Reader. (p. 11)

literary style might also be more generally indebted to *Discoveries*, in which Jonson says much of interest on this subject, for example: 'wheresoever manners and fashions are corrupted, language is. It imitates the public riot' (p. 547).

⁵³ Smith, *R.T.*, p. 61.

Again Parker's language is characterised as inappropriate; he has offended against stylistic and literary proprieties. Through this impropriety Parker's intended effect is reversed and the reader is nauseated rather than impressed by Bramhall. The quarrel here, as elsewhere in *The Rehearsal Transpros'd*, is with *how* Parker writes as much as with what he writes. In fact, literary propriety seems to be, for Marvell, intimately linked to politics.

In highlighting the possible unintentional effects of Parker's writing, however, Marvell draws heavily on his declared source for *The Rehearsal Transpros'd*, Buckingham's *The Rehearsal*, and to look for a moment at this source further underlines Marvell's insistent linkage between written style and politics. In that play, Bayes, and other dramatists like him, are described as being out of control of their own language, the result being that it has the opposite effect on an audience to that which is intended:

For (changing Rules, of late, as if men writ
In spite of Reason, Nature, Art and Wit)
Our Poets make us laugh at Tragedy,
And with their Comedies they make us cry.
(Prologue, lines 11–14)⁵⁴

This 'new way of writing',⁵⁵ (deplored throughout the play by all the characters except Bayes himself) is best summed up by Bayes's own declaration that his writing is worthwhile 'not for words, for those I do not value; but for state, shew, and magnificence'.⁵⁶ Thus, by failing to value words, Bayes loses control of his meanings and becomes ridiculous. In fact, the investment of value in words and using them with due decorum is key to understanding *The Rehearsal Transpros'd*. For example, early on in that work Marvell declares that 'it is the highest *Indecorum* for a Divine to write in such a stile as this [part Play-book and part-Romance] concerning a Reverend Bishop' (p. 12). The '*highest indecorum*' is not, interestingly, a point of doctrine, or a particularly offensive political or religious belief, but the fact that Parker writes 'in such a stile as this'.⁵⁷ This underlines the fact that Marvell considers

⁵⁴ Quoted from D.E.L. Crane (ed.), *George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham: The Rehearsal* (Durham: University of Durham Press, 1976). All quotations from *The Rehearsal* will be taken from this edition.

⁵⁵ *The Rehearsal*, I.i, lines 150–151.

⁵⁶ *The Rehearsal*, V.i, lines 2–4.

⁵⁷ A similar sentiment is expressed later, when he states that what 'is most intolerable' is 'p. 7 of the Preface to his first Book, where he justifies his debauched way of writing by paralel to our Blessed Saviour', (pp. 75–76). Again, a stylistic point warrants expression of the highest disgust.

stylistic corruption to be even more important than, and perhaps a cause of, offensive and dangerous beliefs. Here, we arrive at a key question: which comes first, the corruption of language, or the corruption in politics? The Epilogue to *The Rehearsal* suggests that the two are inextricably bound up:

If it be true, that Monstrous births presage
The following mischiefs that afflict the Age,
And sad disasters to the state proclaim;
Plays without head or tail, may do the same.
Wherefore, for ours, and for the Kingdomes peace,
May this prodigious way of writing cease.
(*The Rehearsal*, Epilogue, lines 11–16)

Whilst ostensibly repeating criticisms frequently made about Bayes throughout the play, these lines make a much wider claim for the consequences of this type of debased writing. Here, debased literary style has undesirable political consequences: Bayes must change his style of writing, not just for the sake of literary taste, but ‘for the Kingdomes peace’, so that ‘sad disasters’ will not be inflicted on the nation. This suggests that corruption of literary style might be prior to, and prophetic of, ‘sad disasters to the state’. Marvell, describing the downfall of The Roman Empire in *The Rehearsal Transpros’d*, makes a comparable claim, suggesting that the fall came ‘most of all from the Corruption of Manners, and alwayes fatal Debauchery’ (p. 56), going on to argue that this ‘exhausts the Estates of private persons, and makes them fit for nothing but the High-way or an Army’ (p. 56). He later claims, on the other hand, that ‘certainly, the Reputation and Interest of the Clergy was first gained’, amongst other things by ‘strictness in Conversation’ (p. 139). The good reputation and well being of the Church, Marvell argues, is dependent on the good speech of its representatives. And here we are moving back into the question of the causes of civil wars: these are the same clergy who went on to forget what they had ‘first gained’, lost their ‘strictness in Conversation’ and thus ‘put the World into Blood’. In this way, just as Marvell’s history of the Civil War becomes a matter for ‘present’ worry, his arguments about language become a matter of pressing contemporary political significance. Marvell’s attack on Parker’s literary style is also an attack, then, both on current political corruption, and on an earlier political and literary corruption which caused a horrific Civil War.

One critic has argued that style is an indicator of politics: ‘Parker’s style betrays his true allegiance, which is to the tyrannical exercise of authority in church and state’ whilst Marvell ‘deploys [...] the stylistic, cultural and religious preferences of the Nonconformists’.⁵⁸ This captures the Jonsonian nature of Marvell’s argument, but perhaps underestimates the extent to which Marvell sees language and politics in a reciprocal relationship. To look at the opening of Marvell’s poem to Lovelace—written from the midst of the end of the Civil War—helps to illustrate this:

Sir,
 Our times are much degenerate from those
 Which your sweet Muse which your fair Fortune chose,
 And as complexions alter with the Climes,
 Our wits have drawne th’infection of our times.
 That candid Age no other way could tell
 To be ingenious, but by speaking well.
 Who best could prayse had then the greatest prayse,
 Twas more esteemed to give, than weare the Bayes:
 Modest ambition studi’d only then,
 To honour not her selfe, but worthy men.
 These vertues now are banisht out of Towne,
 Our Civill Wars have lost the Civicke crowne.
 He highest builds, who with most Art destroys,
 And against others Fame his owne employs.
 (lines 1–14)

The causal link between the politics of the age and writing is, at first glance, clear: the Civil War caused the ‘infection’ of wits and so has lost the ‘Civicke crowne’ and the previous good, generous, and tolerant literary style. It should be noted that the literary style Marvell imagines is not a model of writing associated with any particular political grouping; rather, it is simply the practice of *not* being oppositional. It is striking how far Marvell had come in 1672 when he wrote *The Rehearsal Transpros’d*, a work dedicated to an oppositional mode of discourse, and yet his continued distaste for this mode of engagement is revealed in a declared unwillingness to publish. However, there might be a hint in ‘To His Noble Friend’ that literary decline is a cause as well as an effect of this undesirable political change. In the couplet ‘These vertues now are banisht out of Towne, | Our Civill Wars have lost the Civicke crowne’, the correct order of meaning (the civil war loses the civic crown) is slightly unsettled by the syntax, which places the banishment *before* the ‘Civil Wars’. Moreover, the idea of destroying with art seems to argue for literary art

⁵⁸ Keeble, ‘Why Transpose *The Rehearsal*?’ p. 259.

as an active, rather than a passive force in politics, hinting, perhaps, that literary decline is not just an innocent victim of civil war. This suggests the extent to which, for Marvell, loss of literary style is a source, as well as an indicator, of political corruption. To go back to the two parts of *The Rehearsal Transpros'd*, in looking at this work as both a historical account of the English Civil War and as a literary attack on Samuel Parker, we see all the more clearly how the historical account and the literary attack are intimately connected. The attack on Parker's religious writings becomes an attack on a similar kind of religious activity which was, as Marvell saw it, fundamental to the start of the Civil War. Thus the work acts as a warning against a recurrence of such a war. In attacking Parker's language, however, Marvell—taking on arguments used in Buckingham's *The Rehearsal*—attacks a style of writing which he sees as dangerous—writing which itself might be a cause of civil disturbance. In this way, written style and content become bound up: Parker's style of writing, as well as what he says are crucial to his pernicious, divisive influence on the country. Most unsettling of all is the fact that Marvell imagines that this pernicious literary influence extends to include even his own writing.

It does not single Marvell out to learn that in the period just after the Civil War, Marvell wrote about that war, and yet the extent to which difficulties with writing in such circumstances preoccupied Marvell does make him stand out amongst writers of the period: Marvell did not just write about Civil War, he wrote about writing and the Civil War, and so provides his own compelling commentaries on the issue of the relationship between writing and political context and conflict. This is a commentary which, as we have seen, has too often been ignored amid the critical rush to place contextual and political categories on Marvell. Indeed, the problem of too easy politicisation of Marvell is perhaps most acute in relation to writing of the Civil War, and it is therefore especially important to note the fact that Marvell's Civil War writing was more than political, polemic writing; it was always instead (or also) writing which explored and troubled over the act of writing. Also crucial is the fact that the Civil War, and Civil War writing, remained a preoccupation of Marvell's twenty years later when he was writing Restoration satire. It would seem that a consciousness of the Civil War pervaded and to some extent defined Marvell's whole career as a writer, and that this was not just a political consciousness, but also a difficult literary one. In the next chapter we shall see how this Civil War literary

consciousness found one of its most telling expressions as Marvell became involved in one of the oddest and most troubled events in writing to occur towards the end of the Civil War: the Royalist turn to print.

Chapter 4

‘And Art indeed is Long, but Life is short’: Print, Royalism, and the Act of Writing

1. Marvell and Royalism

The Civil War, and its implications for writing and for interpretation, caused Marvell to think intensely about the possibilities, limitations and dangers of writing. But Marvell posed for himself particularly pressing questions in relation to Civil War literary politics when he contributed verses to two publication projects deeply involved with partisan Royalism. Royalists had their world turned upside down by the English Civil War and by the unthinkable regicide that succeeded it, and they were also the group of people most directly affected by the changes to writing that were engendered by that war. It is in this vexed context that we must set Marvell's involvement in two publication projects of 1649. ‘To His Noble Friend Mr. Richard Lovelace, upon his Poems’ appeared as part of the prefatory material to Richard Lovelace's *Lucasta*, and later in the same year ‘Upon the Death of Lord Hastings’ was included in a volume of elegies entitled *Lachrymae Musarum*. The Royalism of these two publications is in little doubt. Richard Lovelace was a notorious Royalist activist, twice imprisoned for his activities, and he may have prepared *Lucasta* during the second of these stays in prison. Many of his poems in the body of *Lucasta* itself betray this Royalist bias, for example the famous ‘To Lucasta From Prison’, in which Lovelace asks ‘What then remaines, but th'only spring | Of all our loves and joyes? The KING’.¹ *Lachrymae Musarum*, too, is embroiled in Royalist politics: many of its contributors (and its elegised subject) were more or less involved in Royalist military activity during the Civil War, and many of the poets make explicitly Royalist arguments in their contributions to the volume.

¹ C.H. Wilkinson (ed.), *The Poems of Richard Lovelace*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), II, p. 46. All quotations from Lovelace (and dedicatory poems to Lovelace, other than Marvell's own) will be taken from this edition, and will be referenced as Wilkinson I or Wilkinson II. This poem (like all Lovelace's poem in *Lucasta*) was almost certainly written before the regicide, as *Lucasta* was licensed on 4 February 1648, although it was not published until 14 May 1649 (see Wilkinson I, p. lxiv and Margoliouth II, p. 239). Margoliouth concludes that Marvell's poem itself was written during this ‘delay’ in publication, and it is not certain whether the prefatory poems pre- or post-date the regicide, but what is clear is that the prefatory material is set in the aftermath, rather than in the midst, of the Civil War.

The overtly political contexts for these two poems, coupled with the fact that Marvell opted to publish them at all (given what we have seen of his tendency to keep his poetry to himself) might initially suggest that these were two related moments of affirmative political and writerly confidence for Marvell. These poems stand together as a challenge to those who would like to see Marvell as a wholly private, withdrawn or apolitical poet, but they also challenge the vision of Marvell as a proto-left wing hero, given their Royalist context. The traditional response to Marvell's involvement in these publications (as well as his writing 'Tom May's Death' and the Villiers elegy) has been to argue that the decision to publish in these contexts reveals Marvell's 'natural' inclination towards Royalism; this is, in turn, seen as an inclination that subsequently became infected with Cromwellian and oppositional politics. Pierre Legouis, for example, states that from the Lovelace and Hastings poems we can 'tell plainly enough: his sympathies went to the Cavaliers'.² Many have echoed this view, including, for example, John Dixon Hunt, who declares that Marvell's poem to Lovelace, has a 'straightforward attitude, Royalist and Elegiacal'.³ It is assumed, as we have seen in Chapter 1, that Marvell also wrote his best lyric poetry around the time at which these poems were published, and that their Royalist bias underlines the (arguably) cavalier detachment of his lyrics.

Other critics have questioned the idea that these printed poems indicate any kind of Royalist inclination. They have pointed out that these volumes both contain poems by non-Royalists: John Hall, for example, a contributor to both volumes, went on to become a notable writer for, and defender of, Oliver Cromwell.⁴ They have also argued, following Christopher Hill, that 'Marvell's poem to Lovelace no more commits him to Lovelace's Royalist politics than Milton's help to the imprisoned Davenant in 1652 (if he did help him) committed Milton to Davenant's'.⁵ This is

² *Andrew Marvell: Poet, Puritan, Patriot*, p. 13.

³ John Dixon Hunt, *Andrew Marvell: His Life and Writings*, p. 68. Similar views include those of Cleanth Brooks who, concurring with Margoliouth and Legouis, declares the 'pro-Royalist [...] sentiment' of the Hastings and Lovelace poems, 'Marvell's "Horatian Ode"' in William R. Keast (ed.), *Seventeenth Century English Poetry: Modern Essays in Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 321–340, p. 322; R.I.V. Hodge, who declares that 'Marvell's Royalist sympathies were [...] consistent before 1650', *Foreshortened Time*, p. 114; and Michael Craze, who identifies Marvell and Lovelace's 'common pro-Royalist, anti-parliamentary sentiments', *The Life and Lyrics of Andrew Marvell* (London: Macmillan, 1979), p. 35.

⁴ See *DNB* 'John Hall', where it is stated that 'Hall was awarded a pension of 100*l.* per annum by Cromwell and the council for his pamphleteering services'.

⁵ Christopher Hill, 'Milton and Marvell' in C.A. Patrides (ed.), *Approaches to Marvell*, pp. 1–30, p. 4.

reasoning which has been extended to much of Marvell's apparently 'Royalist' poems of this period.⁶ Guilt by association is thus asserted to be false logic; it is argued instead that whilst these poems show that Marvell was moving in Royalist circles, they do not prove that he was himself active in, or even especially sympathetic to, their political cause. This has been an attractive argument for proponents of the contextual revolution who, assuming as they often do that Marvell's political centre resided in opposition to, rather than support for, the monarchy must conclude that these Royalist print contexts do not reflect Marvell's politics. Some have taken more radical steps, and, as we have seen in Chapter 1, Annabel Patterson acts by omission, removing the problem of the possible Royalism of these poems by more or less excluding them—and other Royalist works—from the Marvell canon: she removes the Villiers elegy, queries the authorship of 'Tom May's Death', questions the Royalism of the Lovelace poem, and forgets 'Upon the Death of Lord Hastings' altogether. The contextual revolution more generally has affected a shift in interest away from these poems and towards works of more clearly acceptable politics. To allow the proto-Whig Marvell to come into focus, then, the 'Royalist' Marvell of these two interesting poems has quietly slipped from view.

This politically driven ebbing of interest is unfortunate, because both the Lovelace and Hastings poems centre on issues that should be pivotal to a consideration of Marvell. We might immediately be interested, for example, by the fact that one of these published poems is explicitly about another writer, Richard Lovelace, and that the other 'Upon the Death of Lord Hastings' is as much about the genre of elegy as it is about the particular death of Henry Hastings. And a Royalist context is, at this time, far from simple or uninteresting: as has been suggested (and will become increasingly apparent in this chapter), Royalist positionings in relation to

⁶ Those who have followed Hill include Robert Wilcher, who declares that there is no 'evidence that Marvell shared Lovelace's political allegiance at the time he composed the poem' *Andrew Marvell* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 110; Annabel Patterson, who describes 'To His Noble Friend' as 'not an expression of sympathy with the Royalist cause, but rather with one particular Royalist', *Marvell and the Civic Crown*, p. 17; Leah Marcus, who states that it is 'a poem that subtly undercuts the Cavalier enterprise even as it praises the verse', *The Politics of Mirth*, p. 215; Nicholas Guild, who states (discussing both the Lovelace poem and Marvell's poem to Hastings) that Marvell's 'involvement in a predominantly Royalist production can [...] be traced to an artistic rather than a political association', in 'The Context of Marvell's Early "Royalist" Poems', p. 133; and Manfred Weidhorn, who states that 'both Hall and Marvell [both contributors to both volumes] were [...] committed to the parliamentary side [...] political differences were not allowed to shatter friendships in the republic of letters', *Richard Lovelace* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1970), p. 22.

politics and writing were possibly the most vexed and difficult of all in this period. Might it, then, be more fitting to ask not what these poems show about Marvell's political commitment, but what Marvell says in these poems about the relation between writing and politics? In other words, we might ask how Marvell's poems figure their own relationship to Royalist publication projects after the Civil War, rather than assuming that we already know the answer to this difficult and interesting question. What follows will work on the assumption that these poems—far from being either unthinkingly Royalist or mere occasional trifles unworthy of critical attention—take us into the heart of the questions of writing that have been identified in Chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis.

2. *Lucasta*, Royalism, and Print After the Civil War⁷

Despite the printing of late sixteenth century works such as Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* (1591), and the publication of the 'Works' of both Jonson (1616) and Shakespeare (1623), early in the seventeenth century, which were much admired in Royalist circles, there was still a certain 'stigma of print' in the middle of the seventeenth century for the kinds of poets who contributed to both *Lachrymae Musarum* and *Lucasta*.⁸ As Arthur Marotti puts it: 'aristocratic or "gentle" men and

⁷ On the complexity of Royalism—and Royalist literary culture—in this period, see, for example, John Kerrigan's British Academy lecture on Thomas Carew in *Proceedings of the British Academy* vol. LXXIV 1988 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 311–350; the work of Kevin Sharpe, including *The Personal Rule of Charles I* and *Criticism and Compliment: the Politics of Literature in the England of Charles I*; and James Loxley's book *Royalism and Poetry in the English Civil Wars* (London: Macmillan, 1997), which I have found particularly useful. I am also aware of the complexity of political positioning of many of the 'Royalists' I describe. Directly relevant in this context is Gerald Hammond's British Academy lecture on 'Richard Lovelace and the Uses of Obscurity' in *Proceedings of the British Academy* vol. LXXI 1985 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 203–234, in which he argues that Lovelace's 'poetry has been obscured by the label cavalier' (p. 203). However, I generally avoid the term 'cavalier' and use the term 'Royalist' throughout both as a necessary category for a complex and diverse grouping, and also to indicate that after the Civil War 'Royalism' did in many ways become more monolithic than it was previously, as it took on the character of a more united oppositional movement.

⁸ J.W. Saunders, in his influential article 'The Stigma of Print: A Note on the Social Bases of Tudor Poetry' in *Essays in Criticism* 1 (1951), pp. 139–164, argues that 'it is not too much to say that a consciousness of the stigma of print pervades the whole of sixteenth-century poetry' (p. 150). One could argue that most of the evidence that Saunders cites for the period he considers could be matched in the 1640s. For example, Saunders quotes Francis Davison describing his brother's poems as 'Toyes' (p. 144) a claim that is echoed by Lovelace and others in the 1640s; Saunders also states that 'haste in rushing into print was the crucial sin' (p. 144) and this is a fault which Herrick, a contributor to *Lachrymae Musarum*, berates in his book *Hesperides* of 1648, for example, the poem 'Posting to Printing' simply reads: 'Let others to the Printing Presse run fast, | Since after death comes glory, Ile not haste' quoted from F.W. Moorman (ed.), *The Poetical Works of Robert Herrick* (Oxford: Oxford

women [...] were reluctant to print their poetry because they felt threatened by the commercialising and democratising features of the print medium'.⁹ Print also, as we have seen in Chapter 2, came to be associated with a vulgar concern for popularity and perhaps even political factions who were against the king—prose pamphleteers (who would now be called journalists) who sought to whip up public hostility to the monarchy.

Despite this possible stigma, Lovelace was far from being alone in the late 1640s as a Royalist who turned to print. Royalist 'journalists', of course, rebuffed Parliamentary newsbooks with their own,¹⁰ and many poets went to press, including Robert Herrick, Mildmay Fane, Thomas Carew, James Shirley, Richard Corbett, and Sir John Suckling. Why was there such a Royalist rush to the press at this time? There might have been an element of necessity in publication for Royalist poets: before the Civil War, court culture was physically centred on London, but in the late 1640s those formerly at court were dispersed to an extent that made manuscript transmission impractical. Therefore Royalists published in order to make their culture portable, in order to have a record of a magnificent civilisation which, as they saw it, Parliament was destroying. As Arthur Marotti summarises: 'the medium of print was converted from a potential embarrassment to Royalist writers to a safe haven for their work and a sign of political resistance to the authority of those who had defeated the king's forces' (p. 259). Print replaced the court as the safe haven that these writers needed.

Despite the fact that the status of print was, out of necessity, changing for Royalists, this very necessity, as Marotti suggests, gave the medium a political

University Press, 1921), p. 307. Saunders also claims that 'Friends were legitimate scapegoats, as they always had much to do with the publication of poetry' (p. 145) and we see evidence of this when Herrick (despite his own declared intention *not* to rush to press) urged Mildmay Fane to publish, and succeeded when Fane published his *Otia Sacra* in 1648, see footnote 13, below.

⁹ Arthur Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 210.

¹⁰ For example, *Mercurius Aulicus*, which first appeared in January 1643 in response to Parliamentary newsbooks and 'sought to redress the balance by "communicating the intelligence, and affaires of Court, to the rest of the Kingdome"' (Raymond, *Making the News*, p. 84). The claim of the very first edition of that newsbook was that 'The world hath long enough been abused with falsehoods', but that this publication would 'proceed with truth and candour' found in Peter Thomas (ed.), *The English Revolution III: Newsbooks 1, Oxford Royalist Volume 1* (London: Cornmarket Press, 1971), p. 17.

significance.¹¹ The fact that a Royalist writer such as Lovelace was forced into publishing could itself be taken as a sign that his culture had been unwillingly changed by the Civil War. The medium of print might, in other words, have inevitable connotations of loss and irrevocable (and undesirable) social change. This same impulse, nevertheless, could equally cause print to be seen as a bold political gesture, a sign of fighting against, as well as acceptance of, these losses. Indeed, many Royalists took to print with a real enthusiasm and political defiance, and print became a central feature and strength of a new Royalism as a kind of underground resistance movement.¹² Robert Herrick for one—a contributor to *Lachrymae Musarum* for whom the Civil War entailed great personal upheaval—is one of the most determined advocates of print in the period and repeatedly, in his 1648 volume *Hesperides*, claims for print a timelessness which would be inconceivable in manuscript. For example, his aforementioned plea to Mildmay Fane, another individual who lost a great deal in the Civil War (and who was also a contributor to *Lachrymae Musarum*) is powerful:

You are a Lord, an Earle, nay more, a Man,
Who writes sweet Numbers well as any can:
If so, why then are not These Verses hurled,
Like *Sybel's* Leaves, throughout the ample world?¹³

To fail to publish, Herrick argues, would be to allow work to perish, and this was, for Herrick, a fate to be feared rather than to be embraced. The power of Herrick's argument might be suggested by the fact that Fane did publish his own volume of poetry, *Otia Sacra*, in 1648. Herrick is elsewhere (in suggestively titled poems such

¹¹ Discussing Thomas Carew and John Suckling, Thomas Corns suggests that poetry that 'had celebrated, untendentiously, the life and the values of the personal rule of Charles I carried a new freight of political significance as a sort of reservoir of a culture that was (Royalists hoped temporarily) suspended or superseded', in 'Thomas Carew, Sir John Suckling, and Richard Lovelace', in Thomas Corns (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to English Poetry, Donne to Marvell* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 200–220, p. 201.

¹² For accounts of Royalist resistance at this time see David Underdown, *Royalist Conspiracy in England 1649–1660* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), which undermines any notion that all Royalists had admitted defeat after the regicide; Charles Carlton's *Going to the Wars: The Experience of the British Civil Wars* (London: Routledge, 1992), which challenges the usual early end-date (1649) of the conflict; and Raymond Anselment, who, taking issue with Christopher Hill's notion of defeatist Royalists, discusses 'the political and artistic *struggles* of a tragic generation' (my italics), in *Loyalist Resolve: Patient Fortitude in the English Civil War* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1988), p. 127.

¹³ 'To the Right Honourable Mildmay, Earle of Westmorland', lines 1–4, in Moorman (ed.), *The Poetical Works of Robert Herrick*, p. 171.

as 'Lyric for Legacies' and 'His Poetry His Pillar') eloquent on the positive value of print, in which he sees it as a way of securing an individual, and perhaps beyond that a culture, against temporal losses.

The issue of the printed word is a topic which recurs in the work of those who contributed to *Lucasta* and *Lachrymae Musarum*. Alexander Brome, who contributed to *Lachrymae Musarum* (and also wrote a poem to Lovelace which was not included in *Lucasta* itself), is impassioned in insisting upon the value of the printed word when he elegises Charles I himself:

Now since you'r gone, great Prince, this care we'l have,
Your books shall never find a death or grave;
By whose diviner flame, the world must be
Purged from its dross, and chang'd to purity [...]
Whose leafs shall like the *Cybels* be ador'd,
When time shall open each prophetick word:
And shall like scripture be the rule of good
To those that shall survive the flaming flood:
Whose syllables are Libraries, and can
Make a small volume turn a *Vatican*.¹⁴

Brome sees printed books not just as a forced necessity, but as something which can overcome adverse political circumstances. Brome's claim is, of course, bound up with a belief that those that have won the day are going against God's will, and that their cause will therefore soon perish.¹⁵ But, for Brome, the book as a physical object is the crucial means by which this political-religious truth is carried; whilst Herrick argues that poems will die without print, Brome takes this a step further and sees a whole religious and political cause inextricably linked to the possibility of putting it into a bound, and reproducible volume. As Roman Dubinski points out in a note to this poem, the reference to Charles's 'books' is almost certainly to *Eikon Basilike* (1649), Charles's self-justificatory and hugely successful self-defence in which he cast himself as a Royal martyr.¹⁶ As one critic puts it, this was the book which 'enabled the Royalist reading of the regicide to achieve a substantial presence in the

¹⁴ Alexander Brome, 'On the Death of King Charles', quoted from Roman Dubinski (ed.), *Alexander Brome: Poems*, 2 vols (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), I, p. 295, lines 29–32, 47–52.

¹⁵ This was itself a very common argument in both *Lachrymae Musarum* and in Royalist writing in the period generally.

¹⁶ Dubinski (ed.), *Alexander Brome: Poems* II, p. 107. Dubinski points out that Brome's poem also borrows its portrayal of Charles as martyr from *Eikon Basilike*, p. 107.

new republic'.¹⁷ It is also significant that both Brome and Herrick use the myth of the prophetess Sybil in the course of their poems, and it is easy to see why this might have been an attractive myth for Royalist writers at this time. The most famous Sybil, the Sybil of Cumae, offered to sell nine books of her prophecies to the Roman king Tarquinius Superbus. She eventually sold the final three for the original asking price, having burned the others in an effort to force the sale.¹⁸ Sibylline prophecies, then, unlike oracular prophecies, 'offered discursive forecasts, in response to no particular question, for the enlightenment of the world at large'.¹⁹ Thus this myth encompasses the idea of the destruction of written material, but also the survival and powerful influence of what really matters. Some Royalists seemed to believe that their books, like those powerful Sibylline prophecies which circulated 'in book form' (p. 9) before taking full effect, would ultimately prove prophetic and powerful. Sibylline prophecies stood the test of time: many Royalists believed their writing would do the same.

In printing *Lucasta*, then, Richard Lovelace embroiled his poems in a complex political and literary debate: the act of publication carried not only significance of Royalist cultural and military defeat, but also resistance to, and even denial of, that defeat. By contributing a poem to this collection, Marvell, too, involves himself in such difficult literary-political questions. How does Marvell's poem work in this context? One answer to this key question would emphasise the extent to which Marvell reads Lovelace as a positive role model for the future; he is a sign of better times in the past, and better times to come. We have seen how Marvell imagines Lovelace to be part of an age before the Civil War made a certain kind of literary production impossible; part of a 'candid Age' (line 5) in which writing had more 'Modest ambition' (line 9). Marvell defends Lovelace's book, and seems to argue that although the current age itself is corrupt (as represented by the 'Word-peckers, Paper-rats, Book-scorpions', of line 19) and therefore necessarily hostile to

¹⁷ Loxley, *Royalism and Poetry*, p. 182. Loxley also mentions Brome's poem in this context, stating that 'Brome speaks for many in suggesting that it [*Eikon Basilike*] "shall like scripture be the rule of good | To those that shall survive the flaming flood"', p. 182.

¹⁸ Marvell himself makes interesting use of the myth in 'Upon Appleton House': 'Out of these scatter'd *Sibyls* Leaves | Strange *Prophecies* my Phancy weaves' (lines 577–578). In this passage the 'leaves' are just leaves, not leaves of books, and so Marvell somewhat characteristically reverses the myth by making the active and creative *reading* of these prophetic signs paramount.

¹⁹ H.W. Parke, *Sibyls and Sibylline Prophecy in Classical Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. i.

Lovelace, *Lucasta* itself, ‘being faultlesse’ (line 26), holds out against such destructive and pernicious forces. This appears to be an argument similar to Herrick’s for the endurance of print against destructive forces, and perhaps beyond that for the possibility of Royalist resistance being forged effectively in print. The final lines of the poem emphasise this potential power in the printed word against a hostile and pernicious age:

But he secure of glory and of time
Above their envy, or mine aid doth clime.
Him, valianst men, and fairest Nymphs approve,
His Booke in them finds Judgement, with you Love.
(lines 47–50)

Marvell suggests that the merciless attack on *Lucasta* by censors, and other ‘envious’ writers, is ultimately futile, as the book will find its place in the minds of those that really matter. I shall return to Marvell’s poem later, but it is first worth noting the extent to which this (admittedly superficial) reading of the poem chimes with what other poets have to say in celebration of Lovelace and *Lucasta*. One might first mention the picture and title page that precede the dedicatory verses. The picture shows a group of cherub-like angels carrying large candles and holding a banner which reads ‘*Lucasta* by R.L. esqr.’. They are hovering above a landscape in which two large houses are set, one of which might be described as a castle. This image suggest that *Lucasta* will be above and beyond politics, not only set in the countryside, away from the political intrigue of the court, but also set far above it. The castle depicted in the countryside below the cherubs is perhaps suggestive of the Civil War, but it is only a faint suggestion, as to suggest that the horrors of war are long forgotten. The candles that the cherubs are holding draw out and literalise the possible meaning of the name ‘*Lucasta*’ (*Lux Casta*, or chaste light). This implies that the volume is a light by which to live, or one that will lead to a better future.

Several other contributors are more explicit in arguing that *Lucasta* will provide a kind of lasting monument to Lovelace and to Royalist culture more generally. For example, John Needler champions the ‘pow’r of Art’ over circumstances, comparing Lovelace to Orpheus, who ‘made fiends obey’. His poem ends with an affirmation of this idea:

The wilder Nymphs Lov’s power could not command

Are by the Almighty Numbers brought to hand,
And flyng Daphne's caught, amazed vow
They never heard Apollo court till now.
Tis not by force of Armes this feat is done,
For that would puzzle even the Knight o' th' Sun,
But 'tis by pow'r of Art, and such a way
As Orpheus us'd, when he made fiends obay.²⁰

Needler sets up an image of tremendous, world-changing power, and then locates this power in Lovelace's 'Almighty Numbers'. Having played down the power of the 'force of Armes' (by which Royalist had recently been so crushingly defeated) Needler argues that poetry itself is capable of making 'fiends obay', by the 'pow'r of Art'. It is hard, in this context, not to read in 'fiends' a buried reference to the Parliamentary army, which Royalists were so clearly unable to defeat by armed force. This poem seems to imagine printed poetry as the alternative powerful force which will enable Royalists to claw back what has been lost through military defeat.

Sometimes this argument for the power of the written word shades even more clearly into an affirmative Royalism, whereby the volume itself is imagined to be a powerful act in the ongoing Royalist struggle. Marvell himself is not entirely distant from this, and at one point he celebrates Lovelace as a soldier-poet 'Whose hand so rudely grasps the steely brand' (line 37); Francis Lovelace's poem 'To my Best Brother on his Poems called Lucasta' furnishes another example of this kind of manoeuvre. The very fact that the writer signs himself 'Francis Lovelace, Col', reminds us that he was an active soldier on the King's side in the Civil War,²¹ and his poem is rich with thinly veiled Royalist political meaning:

Now y'have oblig'd the age, the well known Worth
Is to our joy auspiciously brought forth.
Good morrow to thy Son, thy first borne flame,
Which as thou gav'st it birth, stamps it a name;
That faith, and a discerning age shall set
The chiefest jewell in her Coronet. (p. 2)

Lovelace's assertion that his brother is already a 'well known' poet, and that the publication of his poetry in some way obliges 'the age', indicates that he sees his brother's turn to print as something done under the pressure of 'the age', although he

²⁰ John Needler, in Wilkinson II, p. 7.

²¹ See also Norris Jephson, who signs himself ('Col'[onel]) before his contributed poem, thus reminding the reader that he, like the poet's brother Francis, was an active Royalist soldier, Wilkinson II, p. 3.

is quick to declare the event to be an ‘auspicious’ one. Is this simply an assertion of the benefits of so accomplished a poet publishing his work? Perhaps, but, given the traditional disavowal of print by court poets, and the suggestive use of the collective, conspiratorial, ‘our’, the meaning might be more politically charged. We might detect, for example, a strong hint of Royalism in the vision of the ‘Coronet’, and imagine that it represents a future ‘discerning age’ of which Lovelace—along with his brother and the other poets of *Lucasta*—will be a key part. Such meanings come to fruition in the final stanza:

So, my best Brother, if unto your name
I offer up a thin blew burning flame;
Pardon my love, since none can make thee shine;
Unless they kindle first their torch at thine:
Thus as inspired, they boldly write, nay that,
Which their amazed Lights but twinkl’d at,
And their illustrate thoughts doe voice this right,
Lucasta held their Torch, thou gav’st it Light. (p. 2)

This represents a radically new reading of the volume’s title: whilst the title page seems to imagine the chaste light as something far out of reach, a kind of star-like guide, these lines argue that the book will act as an igniting torch which will allow others to write in the manner of Lovelace. *Lucasta*, then, is imagined as a place to which Royalists will go in order to gain inspiration for future political and writerly efforts.

Thomas Rawlins makes a similar point when he imagines the collection as being like a ‘Vestall flame, that should for ever live | Plac’t in a Cristal Temple’ (p. 12). The function of this temple (with Lovelace’s name engraved on the porch) appears at first to be to honour the imaginary woman ‘Lucasta’ herself, but the closing lines of the poem imagine a wider significance:

The Marble steps that to the Alter brings
The hallowed Priests with their cleane Offerings
Shall hold their Names, that humbly crave to be
Votaries to’ th’ shrine, and grateful Friends to thee:
So shal we live (although our Offrings prove
Meane to the World) for ever by thy Love. (p. 12)

As with the slippery use of ‘our’ in Francis Lovelace’s opening poem and elsewhere in the volume, we might suspect that the collective of ‘we’ in the penultimate line of the poem means ‘we Royalists’, and that therefore that he imagines this gathering in

print to be like a physical gathering, and therefore potentially powerful. However, there is an attendant sense of the tenuous nature of this power, admitted by the parenthetical but crucial admission that their 'Offerings' will in fact 'prove | Meane to the World'. 'We' will live forever in love with Lovelace, but the wider world, Rawlins ruefully admits, will be oblivious.

Looking closely at some of the other poems in *Lucasta* casts doubt on the extent to which they all share the kind of affirmative Royalism which is set up in the opening of the book. John Pinchbacke's poem, for example, sets Lovelace beyond and above Civil War politics, and expresses amazement that Lovelace could write poetry during wartime:

Now when the wars augment our woes and fears
And the shrill noise of drums oppresse our ears,
Now peace and safety from our shores are fled
To holes and caverns to secure their head:
Now all the graces from the land are sent,
And the nine Muses suffer banishment,
Whence spring these raptures? whence this heavenly rime?
So calme and even in so harsh a time. (p. 5)

Pinchbacke depicts a war-torn land in which poetry is impossible: the country is frightened, oppressed by constant noise, and in perpetual danger. Against this he sets the extraordinary apolitical calm of Lovelace's poetry. In the next section, Pinchbacke sets up a comparison between Lovelace and his poetic predecessors:

Well might that charmer his faire Caelia crowne,
And that more polish't Tyterus renowne
His Sacarissa, when in groves and bowres
They could repose their limbs on beds of flowrs. (p. 5)

The 'charmer' refers to Thomas Carew, and 'Tyterus' to Edmund Waller (who wrote to 'Sacarissa'), and so Pinchbacke is making a significant distinction between different generations of those writers often (somewhat anachronistically) grouped together as the 'Cavalier' poets. Pinchbacke suggests that it was easy for these earlier poets to write as they did in the peaceful 1630s. Lovelace, on the other hand, is all the more impressive for writing the same transcendent poetry during the Civil War, 'when peace is hurried hence on rages wing'. In fact, this poem is one of the few in the volume directly to mention the Civil War, which is referred to as 'our seven yeers paines', and Pinchbacke's final couplet suggests an affirmative role for Lovelace's

verse in this context: 'He stroke the Lute with like-admired art | And made the dammed to forget their smart'. He imagines England to be mortally wounded by the Civil War, but that *Lucasta* works against this pain. And yet the idea of forgetting rather than angry remembrance might move towards relinquishing, rather than continuing, political resistance. If this poem mourns for the loss of a culture, it hovers between resistance and hopelessness, seeing poetry as an escape from, rather than as a clear inspiration to, future action and political endeavour.

The fact that the end of the prefatory material of *Lucasta* is distinctly less sure of itself than the opening poems might lead us to speculate that the editor (who may of course have been Lovelace himself) placed the most affirmative poems early on in the volume in an attempt to emphasise the positive, optimistic possibilities for the volume. If the dedicatory material to *Lucasta* begins with the confident visions of the cherubic picture, and Francis Lovelace's Royalist political manoeuvrings, the final poem in English sees Lovelace's other brother, Dudley—a former captain in the Royalist army—expressing more defeatist and anxious thoughts. It is significant that his first utterance argues that it is *not* his place to 'offer to thy name, | Ecomiums of thy lasting Fame'. The poem moves not upwards and outwards to a bright Royalist future, but downwards and inwards to the poet's own war-ravaged body:

Mine's but a Yonger-Brother Wit;
A Wit that's hudled up in Scarres,
Borne like my rough selfe in the Warres;
And as a Squire in the fight,
Serves only to attend the Knight:
So 'tis my glory in this Field,
Where others act, to beare thy Shield. (p. 13)

Dudley undermines his own abilities as a writer to the extent that his poem cannot offer celebration. In fact, the focus is on himself and his own suffering in the wars, and so his poem serves to underline not a glorious Royalist future, but the painful writing of a past (and failed) war onto his own scarred body. To compare this poem (and that by Thomas Rawlins) with that by Lovelace's other brother Francis, suggests the divergence in the volume between defeatism and defiance. Whilst Francis Lovelace imagines a positive, nation-wide, light-giving role for *Lucasta*, Dudley Lovelace and Thomas Rawlins seem to think its effect, if registered at all, will be highly limited.

If there are gaps in what is, at first sight at least, the smooth surface of *Lucasta's* Royalism, and in its positive view of the printed word, a closer reading of Marvell's poem similarly undermines the affirmative model of writing suggested by the initial reading given above. To return first to the opening of the poem, we might note that the notion of loss is paramount, and that Marvell does not seem to imagine a great deal of hope for these 'degenerate' (line 1) times. Although Lovelace's era is imagined to be one of 'fair Fortune' (line 2) Marvell does not directly suggest that that age is in any way re-creatable. Rather, he spends many lines fleshing out and detailing the irreversible corruption of the current age, culminating in the finalising 'Our Civill Wars have lost the Civicke crowne' (line 12), which leaves very little room for hope. Also, we might notice that in Marvell's famous pronouncement, the collective pronoun does not work in the way it typically does in *Lucasta* to mean 'we Royalists'. Rather, it works to place the blame both for the wars and for the subsequent loss of the 'Civicke crowne' on the whole nation. In fact, the opening of Marvell's poem is punctuated with the language of collective responsibility for corruption—'Our times are much degenerate [...] Our wits have drawne th'infection of our times [...] Our Civill Wars'—which serve to emphasise the fact that Marvell refuses to blame the Civil War on others. Marvell figures himself, Lovelace, and the other poets in *Lucasta* as being collectively to blame as part of a country that, inexplicably, has turned viciously against itself. In doing so he pointedly refuses to lay blame on any one side in the conflict.

The section detailing the attacks on *Lucasta* also reveals itself to be less amenable to an affirmative reading than initially suggested:

I see the envious Caterpillar sit
 On the faire blossome of each growing wit.
 The Ayre's already tainted with the swarms
 Of Insects which against you rise in arms.
 Word-peckers, Paper-rats, Book-scorpions,
 Of wit corrupted, the unfashion'd Sons.
 The barbed Censurers begin to looke
 Like the grim consistory on thy Booke;
 And on each line cast a reforming eye,
 Severer than the young Presbytery.
 (lines 15–24)

The reading of this section given above assumes that the forces ranged against Lovelace and his book are Parliamentary censors, which allows for the possibility

that Lovelace's writing might somehow escape this censorship.²² Yet there is a sense in the image of the envious caterpillar sitting on 'each growing wit' of all writing being corrupt, which is an idea that does not allow for the distinction between 'us and them' that a cursory reading might suggest. Thinking of these corrupt wits as insects, Marvell imagines the air itself to be 'tainted' with them, such is their number, and, like the bees in 'Upon Appleton House', these insects seem to be uncannily powerful, unexpectedly having 'arms', not just stings and diseases, with which to threaten Lovelace. Moreover, the force of the line 'Wood peckers, Paper-rats, Book Scorpions' is considerable, as it makes a striking rhythmic interruption to the flow of the poem: the two caesuras, and two dactyls, cut harshly against the poem's iambic rhythm. This is a line which might be said to enact its own description of jarring, discordant writing. We might also note that whilst a 'word pecker' might be a pecker of other people's words (that is, a censor) it might also be one who pecks using words. It might suggest, in other words, that it is not only censors attacking Lovelace, but also other writers. Similarly, 'paper rats' might mean both one who attacks writing like a rat, but also one who is a rat-like writer,²³ and the third item in the list ('Book Scorpions') again points in two directions at once, describing both censors who sting Lovelace's writing but also writers whose words have a stinging attack. Marvell describes in this list not only censors, then, but the host of bad—or simply oppositional—writers who compete with Lovelace and *Lucasta*, and are imagined as making his life as a writer difficult, if not impossible. Marvell's poetic technique is to work by suggestive double meaning whereby Lovelace's critics are at once his censors and, the pun is Marvell's, his 'censurers', and so it seems that Marvell figures the whole nation's bad writing (and bad reading) as ranged against Lovelace, not simply those with power to censor. The drama between censure and censorship is, in fact, played out in the word itself. The various *OED* definitions of the words 'censor' and 'censure' (as both nouns and verbs) show their meanings in the period to be very much intertwined, ranging from assessment and judgement, through disapproval, to government backed control, and they find their common etymological

²² See Margoliouth I, p. 239 for this conventional reading.

²³ It was not known in the seventeenth century that rats carry plague, but the animals were associated with a lack of hygiene and destructiveness, for an account of which see J.F.D. Shrewsbury, *A History of Bubonic Plague in the British Isles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), especially pp. 7–16.

root in the Latin 'censere', meaning to judge or to assess.²⁴ In the word 'censurers', then, Marvell found an apt vehicle for the expression of both his anxiety over the possible censorship which might be placed on Lovelace's work by a hostile government, and his worries over the more general hostility and bad writing with which good writing might be greeted. In this way Marvell's attack on writing becomes far more general than is usually acknowledged; he does not simply attack the government and its *controls* on writing, but berates the great swarm of bad writing which surrounds Lovelace's beautiful, but unique, little book of poetry.

The implications of this point, then, also stretch to the act of reading and Marvell seems to argue that whilst he himself can see the worth in Lovelace's poetry, few others will, and again suggests that good reading, as well as good writing, is highly unusual. Marvell's position is reminiscent of that of Charles I, who comments on the scandal of his letters being discovered and read, and in doing so imagines good and bad readers: 'Bees will gather honey where the spider sucks poison'.²⁵ Like Charles, Marvell casts readers as active and decisive in deciding what writing ultimately amounts to, yet whilst *Eikon Basilike*, written with a political purpose, seeks to encourage those good readers who will 'gather honey', Marvell's poem allows little or no room for good reading in the climate it portrays of debased literary standards. He concludes, effectively, that all will 'suck poison' from *Lucasta*, and goes on to argue that even if nothing specific is found to be wrong with *Lucasta*, Lovelace 'shall for being faultlesse be accus'd' (line 26). Marvell thus paints a picture of contemporary life dominated by bad writing and bad reading, in which a good writer simply *cannot* win.

Although Marvell makes it clear that his praise of Lovelace is a purely literary one, he mocks those who make premature political judgement about Lovelace's work suggesting, with a defeated tone that:

Some reading your *Lucasta*, will alledge
You wrong'd in her the Houses Priviledge.
Some that you under sequestration are,

²⁴ *OED* defines a 'censurer' as 'one who censures' and gives definition of the verb 'to censure' which range from (1) 'to estimate, judge of, pass judgement on', to (6) 'To exercise censorship over'. Moreover 'censure' as a noun is given (5b) as 'any official supervisor, e.g. of the censor of the press', and although the first usage in this sense is given as 1663 this meaning is indicative of the suggestive range of meanings to which the word might extend.

²⁵ Edward Scott (ed.), *Eikon Basilike*, p. 157.

Because you write when going to the Warre,
And one the Book prohibits, because *Kent*
Their first Petition by the Authour sent.
(lines 27–32)

This further extends Marvell's attack on bad *reading*, by sending-up a certain kind of biographical interpretation which too easily equates writer with work; it is a foolish reader, Marvell implies, which associates the writer and his political actions too closely with the work. Again Marvell sees this kind of wrong-headed reading as being characteristic of the current times, and this is underlined by the recurrence of 'Some' followed by the final, despairing 'one', as if to suggest that some 'one' will think of every possible foolish criticism it is possible to make. It is crucial to admit, nevertheless, that the charges against Lovelace that Marvell describes are more or less true: Lovelace *did*, effectively, wrong the 'Houses Priviledge', for example in his poem 'To Lucasta From Prison' in which he denigrates Parliament as a 'body that's beheaded';²⁶ he *did* write when embroiled in the Civil War, and he was effectively sequestered; and he *did* send a petition from Kent to Parliament and was imprisoned for the act. What is important to notice is that Marvell's poem expresses resentment towards unsophisticated readers who make a facile link between politics and writing, not towards the substance of charges against Lovelace himself. Although Marvell offers his support to Lovelace, asserting the artistic supremacy of his poetry, he does not imagine any possible victory beyond a purely literary one, and seems to argue here, as before, that *Lucasta* will ultimately achieve nothing. Marvell, in other words, offers models of good and bad reading—the latter being more or less associated with too easy linkage of the poet and his works—but asserts that bad reading is more or less the only kind which Lovelace's work is currently going to receive.

There is, however, an important 'but' which follows this apparently hopeless vision of contemporary England, as if to suggest that what follows will be a retraction of, or an alternative to, what has gone before:

But when the beauteous Ladies came to know
That their deare *Lovelace* was endanger'd so:
Lovelace that thaw'd the most congealed brest,
He who lov'd best and them defended best.
Whose hand so rudely grasps the steely brand,
Whose hand so gently melts the Ladies hand.

²⁶ Wilkinson II, p. 45.

They all in mutiny though yet undrest
 Sally'd, and would in his defence contest.
 And one the loveliest that was yet e're seen,
 Thinking that I too of the rout had been,
 Mine eyes invaded with a female spight,
 (She knew what pain 'twould be to lose that sight.)
 O no, mistake not, I reply'd, for I
 In your defence, or in his cause would dy.
 (lines 33–46)

Gerald Hammond, writing about this section of the poem, argues that 'It is characteristic of Marvell that this vision of an heroic, beleaguered Lovelace should then dissolve into mock-heroic'.²⁷ Hammond grasps well the extent to which this 'defence' of Lovelace is really no effective defence at all: the 'but', although drawing the reader to expect something against the grain of the previous, and somewhat hopeless, lines of the poem, finally fails to do this expected work. The powerful image of Lovelace grasping the 'steely brand' is subsumed beneath the welter of comic incongruity centred on Lovelace's own erotic desirability. To take that image of Lovelace grasping the sword out of context might be to see Marvell in line with those in *Lucasta* who argue for Lovelace as a model cavalier. To read the line in its poetic context is to see the extent to which Marvell complicates and undermines this easy view of Lovelace and his potential as a role model for Royalist activity. By merging Lovelace as fighter with Lovelace as object of erotic desire, Marvell defeats the former and turns the latter into burlesque comedy. Marvell's failure adequately to defend Lovelace is hinted at by the comical suspicion that Marvell himself 'of the rout had been'. The final two couplets offer yet another 'but' which threatens to contradict what has gone before:

But he secure of glory and of time
 Above their envy, or mine aid doth clime.
 Him, valianst men, and fairest nymphs approve,
 His Booke in them finds Judgement, with you Love.
 (lines 47–50)

One reading of this ending might argue that this time the 'but' does its work, and that these lines offer a final defence of Lovelace, who will find love and judgement amongst those readers who really matter. However, the lines also seem to effect a typically Marvellian unravelling of the project of his poem, as they assert that if

²⁷ 'Richard Lovelace and the Uses of Obscurity', p. 207.

Lovelace is to 'climb', he will—like Cromwell in 'The First Anniversary'—climb *without* the assistance of Marvell's poem, rising above both Marvell's own 'aid' just as he rises above the hindrance of others. If this is an affirmation of Lovelace and *Lucasta*, then, it is one which simultaneously un-writes itself as a poem of praise. As with his poem to Dr Witty, in which Marvell imagines his own poem of praise burning whilst Witty's translation lasts forever, Marvell deliberately writes himself out of his own vision of Lovelace's success. Yet even that vision of success is more problematic than perhaps it first appears. The meaning of the word 'of' in line 47 raises some tricky issues. Is Lovelace secure *in* his glory and *in* his time, with the possible implication that he is stuck in the past (or is resting on his laurels)? Or is he being described as being a poet *for* all time, and therefore a possible model for the restoration of Royalist ideals? The final couplet, too, presents difficult questions regarding Lovelace and his poetic legacy. By asserting that 'valiant men' most approve Lovelace, we might think that Marvell emphasises Lovelace's role as a model for the action of such men. But the coupling of these men with entirely different, and clearly more frivolous, readers—the 'fairest nymphs'—serves to deflate this serious and grand possible function, as does, perhaps, the use of the word 'Judgement' which might also hint at possible God-like (and final) *disapproval*.

Here, as throughout the poem, Marvell takes away from Lovelace as he gives, and in doing so asks the most difficult kinds of questions about Royalism and its possible continuation through writing and publication. Not only does Marvell seem to write himself out of an affirmatively Royalist vision of the future, he makes the vision itself so fraught as to leave the reader entirely uncertain that it is a positive vision at all. This Marvellian venture into print, then, explores the possible contradictions and problems in an apparently affirmative Royalist publication project such as *Lucasta*. In doing so this poem is no less a part of the context from which it springs—this is not an argument which suggests that Marvell sits 'above' this particular context—but it does interact with its literary and political context in ways which are active and, in certain respects, subversive. If we argue that the overall aim of the volume—as suggested by the opening of the prefatory material—is to assert *Lucasta* as a focus for future Royalist activity and hope, then Marvell explores and questions this project. That is not to say that 'To His Noble Friend Mr. Richard Lovelace, upon his Poems' is a poem which is anti-Royalist, but that it constitutes an

essay on the possibility of Royalist celebration and writing, and that it seems to conclude that the act of publication after the Civil War is one fraught with possible misunderstandings, difficulties and doubts. We might speculate that these lurking difficulties within Royalist writing at this time explain Marvell's attraction towards such a publication project: not all contributions to *Lucasta* are entirely affirmative, and we have seen that others to some extent share his doubts and anxieties. The submerged difficulties that might be detected in *Lucasta* bubble much closer to the surface in the other Royalist print collection to which Marvell contributed around this time.

3. 'Upon the Death of Lord Hastings', *Lachrymae Musarum*, and Mourning after the Civil War

Lachrymae Musarum had much in common with *Lucasta*, in that it contained poems by a diverse group of largely Royalist poets, and afforded those poets the chance to group together in print to create something collective, and potentially anti-establishment. Both volumes provided an opportunity, in other words, for Royalist public wound licking and dark threats of future Royalist resurgence, and Marvell was not the only writer who contributed to both.²⁸ However, the differences between these volumes are almost as important as the similarities, because *Lachrymae Musarum* marked not a potential cause for celebration, but a young death: contributors to this volume were not offering readings of praiseworthy poetry about to go public through print, but mournful tributes to a young man dead before his time. The occasion was, in fact, a particularly tragic one, as the volume was published in the summer of 1649 to mark the death of the young aristocrat Henry Hastings, who died from smallpox the day before he was due to be married. The news of this death evidently provoked mourning beyond his family and their circle, because, as well as Marvell, several poets, such as Marchamont Nedham, and a group of Westminster schoolboys including the young John Dryden, sent in poems of condolence which were included in a postscript to the volume. Henry was the only

²⁸ Any work on *Lachrymae Musarum* is particularly indebted to Michael Gearin-Tosh's scholarly article 'Marvell's "Upon the Death of Lord Hastings"', and his work on the volume is my starting point for investigations in this section.

son of Ferdinando, the Earl of Huntingdon, and the main body of the volume contains elegies written by friends and associates of this powerful Midlands family. These included aristocrats such as Mildmay Fane (the Earl of Westmorland), Lord Falkland, Sir Arthur Gorges and Sir Aston Cokaine; the writers John Hall, Richard Brome (the volume's editor), and Alexander Brome; and several clergymen, and former clergymen, including Robert Herrick, three of the Pestel family, Francis Standish, John Cave and John Joynes, a Hastings family chaplain. Just over a year after Hastings's death, Joynes would preach a joyous sermon on the baptising of Theophilus Hastings, who continued the Hastings family line after the tragic death of the family's only son. However, what Joynes referred to in that sermon as the 'late inestimable loss'²⁹ of Henry Hastings clearly became an occasion for considerable public mourning, and there is a pressing sense in *Lachrymae Musarum* that Hastings's death had implications beyond the family circle. As Francis Standish urged:

Forbear, forbear, Great house of Huntingdon,
T'engros this Grief, as it 'twere all your own:
The kingdom has a share; and every Eye
Claims priviledge to weep his Elegie.³⁰

The public demand for the volume must have exceeded expectation, as a second edition was printed in 1650: this death—or more accurately, this occasion for public mourning—was one in which, it was perceived, the kingdom had a share. A broadside depicting Henry's tombstone was published³¹ and Henry's grandmother, Lady Eleanor Douglas, herself a notable poet, did not contribute to *Lachrymae Musarum*, but instead published *Sions Lamentation* (1649) for Henry. The reason for this considerable public grief for a young man who had not, in fact, made any remarkable personal achievements was, to some extent, the close proximity of his death to the regicide: Francis Standish makes this clear when he asks 'What though

²⁹ John Joynes, *A Sermon Preached in the year of our Lord 1650. January 9. At the Baptizing of Theophilus, (Then Lord Hastings) Now Earl of Huntingdon* (1668).

³⁰ Francis Standish, 'An Elegie Upon the death of Henry Lord Hastings, the onely Son and Heir of the Right Honourable Ferdinando Earl of Huntingdon; Deceasing Immediately before the day designed for his Marriage' in Richard Brome (ed.), *Lachrymae Musarum* (London: Thomas Newcombe, 1649), p. 26. In the absence of a modern edited edition of *Lachrymae Musarum*, I quote from the first edition of the book itself, with the exception of Marvell's poem which is quoted, as usual, from Margoliouth.

³¹ The Thomason collection 669. f15 (8).

our loss be great; so great that none | In our Age has exceeded it, but One'.³² Despite being cautious in his wording, Standish leaves the reader in no doubt that Charles I's execution is also in his thoughts and, in this way, Henry's death becomes bound up with lamenting the regicide. 'J.B.' names what was for Standish unnameable, and imagines Hastings in an afterlife 'neer *Charles* his Wain' (p. 53). Indeed, such elegies as there were for Charles closely resemble elegies in *Lachrymae Musarum*, lending weight to the suggestion that Hastings was mourned, at least to some extent, as a surrogate for Charles.³³ More than this, however, Hastings's death came to stand, as John Joynes put it, as a 'Cypher for these many yeers'.³⁴ As a promising young aristocrat—one who was, according to his Grandmother, 'inclining to the Royal party',³⁵—Hastings's death came to represent the Royalist war dead and, more widely, was emblematic of a court culture which seemed to be on the verge of extinction.

As a result of this, like a few of the contributions to *Lucasta*, some of the poems in *Lachrymae Musarum* seem, as Marvell himself puts it, in 'Upon the Death of Lord Hastings', 'disconsolate' (line 7), seeing the death of Hastings as the final signal of the end of an already beleaguered Royalist culture. Some of the poets imply, in other words, that Hastings represented the final bastion of Royalist hope and values, and that his death therefore should engender a complete loss of any hope for the future. This is understandable, as the talk of loss in this volume is not just talk: many of the contributors lost almost everything during the course of the Civil War. Sir Aston Cokaine 'was staunch to his religion and to his King, and sustained heavy pecuniary losses in their cause'.³⁶ Mildmay Fane, the Earl of Westmorland, despite the fact that he eventually made his peace with Parliament and recovered some of his losses, was sequestered and 'arrested as a delinquent and lodged in the Tower in 1642'.³⁷ Robert Herrick was sequestered before 25 March 1646 and so lost his living

³² Francis Standish, *Lachrymae Musarum*, p. 27.

³³ See, for example, Anon, 'The Scotch Soldiers Lamentation Upon The Death of the Most Glorious and Illustrious Martyr, King Charles', Thomason E560 (15).

³⁴ John Joynes, 'On the Incomparable Lord Hastings: An Elegie', *Lachrymae Musarum*, p. 29.

³⁵ *Sions Lamentation, Lord Henry Hastings, His Funerals blessing, by his Grandmother, the Lady Eleanor* (1649), p. 8.

³⁶ *DNB* Sir Aston Cokaine.

³⁷ *DNB* Mildmay Fane.

at Dean Prior.³⁸ The Pestel family, three of whom contributed to the volume, had an especially difficult time. Thomas Pestel (senior) was a Royal Chaplain and had a considerable reputation as a preacher, regularly printing his sermons. During the wars he fell on hard times, and was forced to give up his living at Packington to his son Thomas, complaining that he was 'five times robbed and plundered of his goods and cattle'.³⁹ Packington was, in the event, seized from Thomas junior soon after he had acquired it. Thomas senior's other son William fared little better, and was driven from his living at Cole Orton in 1652 for his loyalty to the King.⁴⁰

The Hastings themselves came to be somewhat emblematic of aristocratic losses in the war as the death of their promising son Henry was the last in a series of disasters for the family. Ferdinando's estate was sequestered after he moved to a family home at Ashby which had become an important Royalist garrison in the Civil War.⁴¹ After the Royalist defeat, however, Ashby itself was seized and partly destroyed;⁴² and the fall of this house was a matter of particular emotional and symbolic significance. John Joynes, for example, a Hastings family chaplain, devotes the end of his poem of condolence to a parallel between the fall of Ashby towers and the death of Hastings:

Thy Tow'rs (O Ashby) did prognosticate,
Which fell the dutious ushers to his fall:
There was no further use of them at all,
Since he must fall, for whose sake they had stood:
Not be at all, as to no end's as good.
This these Prophetick Buildings did perceive,
And, bowing to the ground before, took leave.⁴³

Although this linking of the two may seem fanciful on the part of Joynes—a kind of bad taste metaphysical conceit akin to Dryden's comparison of Hastings's smallpox

³⁸ A.G. Matthews (ed.), *Walker Revised (Being a Revision of John Walker's Sufferings of the Clergy during the Grand Rebellion 1643–60)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 114–115. Hereafter *Walker Revised*.

³⁹ *DNB* Thomas Pestel.

⁴⁰ *Walker Revised*, p. 242.

⁴¹ See Mary Anne Everett (ed.), *Calendar of The Proceedings of the Committee for Compounding, &c., 1643–1660* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1892), p. 1043, and also Francis Bickley (ed.), *Historical Manuscripts Commission Report on the Manuscripts of the Late Reginald Rawdon Hastings*, 4 vols (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1930), IV, p. 351, for separate but consistent accounts of this. The latter will hereafter be referenced as *HMC Hastings*.

⁴² See *HMC Hastings* IV, p. 351 for an account of this from the Hastings biographer, William Dugdale, and II, p. 139 for a letter relating to this seizure.

⁴³ John Joynes, 'On the Incomparable Lord Hastings: An Elegie', *Lachrymae Musarum*, p. 31.

This is not entirely surprising, especially given the Royalist military credentials of many of the contributors. Through Henry Hastings's uncle, also Henry Hastings (later ennobled as Lord Loughborough by Charles I for his services during the Civil War), the Hastings family were associated with extreme Royalist activity. Loughborough was one of the 'grand delinquents' of the Royalist cause and he escaped possible execution at the end of the wars only through an escape from prison and flight to the continent with the future Charles II. A letter from Ireton to Hastings's mother shows the extent to which Ferdinando Hastings and his wife, though officially refusing to take part in the war, were associated, through Loughborough, with Royalist action,⁴⁹ and one broadside places the young Henry at Colchester with his uncle as one of the 'Colonels who had no command of Regiments, yet assisting at that Fight'.⁵⁰ Moreover, some of the contributors to *Lachrymae Musarum* were directly involved with Loughborough's military activities. Correspondence between Sir Arthur Gorges and Loughborough puts Gorges's involvement beyond doubt, and Falkland too may have been involved with Loughborough.⁵¹ The clergyman Francis Standish was also accused of 'scouting in the night with the Kings forces' and of giving a horse to Loughborough at Ashby.⁵² John Rosse was imprisoned for his part in Royalist actions, and also spent time at Ashby acting as a Chaplain (p. 244). John Cave was probably involved in Royalist military activity, a charge which led to his own sequestration.⁵³ Thomas Pestel senior, and his son Thomas, for a time both lived at the Ashby garrison with Loughborough and acted as chaplain to the family at this time. For some of the contributors to *Lachrymae Musarum* Hastings is a Cavalier hero, a young man who

of his mourners', *Secret Rites and Secret Writing: Royalist Literature 1649–1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 192. Dennis Kay captures the duality of the volume when he suggests that the book is 'in some respects a self-consciously defiant sequence' and *at the same time* is 'a manifestation of defeat', *Melodious Tears: The English Funeral Elegy from Spenser to Milton* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 222.

⁴⁹ *H.M.C Hastings*, Volume II, p. 83.

⁵⁰ Thomason 669 f.13 (6). Gearin-Tosh was the first person to find this document placing Henry Hastings at the siege.

⁵¹ See *HMC Hastings* II, pp. 120–122 for correspondence between Gorges and Loughborough, and p. 90 for a letter suggesting Falkland's involvement.

⁵² *Walker Revised*, p. 245.

⁵³ See *HMC Hastings* II, p. 90 for a letter from Falkland to Colonel Hastings (later Lord Loughborough) and Volume II, pp. 120, 121, 134, for letters between Gorges and Hastings. Gorges was the son of Sir Arther Gorges (1557 to 1625), the courtier and poet. There is also evidence that both John Cave and Francis Standish collaborated with Loughborough, see *Walker Revised*, pp. 233, 245.

might have emulated and even surpassed his heroic uncle's deeds: one poem compares his death to that of Sir Philip Sidney, underlining this association with Cavalier heroism.⁵⁴ William Pestel makes the link with Loughborough more explicit when he thanks God that one 'Loyal Henry' (namely Loughborough) has survived in the Hastings family (p. 59). For this group of people, then, many of whom were more or less directly involved in Royalist military action, Henry Hastings is mourned as a Cavalier war hero. Marvell's poem 'Upon the Death of Lord Hastings' in some ways invests in this kind of heroism, depicting Hastings as part of a serenely Cavalier scene where he lives in a '*Chrystal Palace*' (line 33) before which 'armed Angels hold their *Carouzels*' (line 34) and from where he can view 'the *Turnaments* | Of all these Sublunary elements' (lines 35–36). This afterlife also sees Hastings 'rejoyc[ing]' (line 40) at the '*happie Names*' (line 38) of his aristocratic stock enrolled in the '*Eternal Book*' (line 37).⁵⁵

If Marvell flirts with a positive role for a Royalist image of Hastings, then he is chiming with many in *Lachrymae Musarum* who, as with the contributors to *Lucasta*, conceive a positive role for the printed word in the face of Royalist losses. Some contributors seem almost to envisage *Lachrymae Musarum* itself as a kind of 'Eternal Book' such as that which Marvell imagines in Hastings's happy afterlife. The illustration given as a title page indicates something of this, showing a young man, presumably representing Hastings, standing in an urn, shrouded, and surrounded by weeping Muses. This suggests that the tears of the muses (and, thus, *Lachrymae Musarum* itself) will be a way of keeping Hastings's memory, and all that is associated with it, alive. This is endorsed by the epigraph from Horace on the facing page, which translates as 'The Muses forbid the man worthy of praise to die', and the Latin poem by Edward Montague beneath the picture itself, which concludes that 'the Castalian water brought forth in tears' will 'moisten this British flower placed in earth'. William Pestel's poem in the body of the volume itself presents an even more powerful vision of what a printed volume under these circumstances could achieve. This poem, which was presented at Henry's funeral, works powerfully as a

⁵⁴ 'O Sydneian! O Blood-Royal Fate!' Thomas Pestel, *Lachrymae Musarum*, p. 21.

⁵⁵ Marvell here picks up on a more general insistence in the volume on the link between the Hastings family and the Royal family. For example, Thomas Higgons, who wrote a panegyric to Charles II on his Restoration states that Henry's blood 'Springs [...] from the Royal loyns of *Englands Kings*' (p.

piece to read out at a funeral gathering, but also as a model of how *Lachrymae Musarum* might function as a book:

How comes this press of People to this place,
Oppress'd with inward Anguish? On each face
Sorrow sits deeply printed; and each eye,
Swoln big with Grief, drops down an Elegie.⁵⁶

The funeral itself is imagined as something which will cause sorrow to be 'printed' on those who attend, and that the grief will cause the writing of many elegies. It is as if each elegy in the volume is figured as a tear which comes from the eyes of those attending Hastings's funeral. This conflation of the funeral and the book of elegies itself is not unique: Charles Cotton opens his elegy with an image of himself amongst 'the mourners that attend his Herse | With flowing eyes, and with each Tear a Verse',⁵⁷ effectively turning the volume into a kind of funeral procession in print. Just as Pestel uses print as a metaphor for the sorrow occasioned by Hastings's funeral, Cotton uses a funeral as a metaphor for a printed volume. In this way, the ideas of physical, public gathering, and gathering in print become intertwined, arguing for *Lachrymae Musarum* as a powerful site for collective and public grief. As Pestel's poem continues, however, further implications are developed about the role of such a gathering:

Who can be silent now, or so dull grown,
Not to have sense? An universal Groan
Befits a General Loss. Come, let us sigh
Together; so conspiring far more high
To raise his Fame and Monument.

Pestel's subtle shift, from literal 'sighing together' to its etymological derivative 'conspiring' links the act of grief with an act of political resistance. Given that 'conspiring' was precisely what Royalist activity became in the Interregnum—about which there was continuous Parliamentary nervousness and paranoia—then this places the volume subtly but firmly in the realm of resistant political activity. The mention of 'Monument' echoes many other Royalist publications of the period,

11), Thomas Higgons describes this death as a 'Blood-Royal Fate!' (p. 21) and John Rosse mentions Henry's 'Royal Blood' and describes his family as a 'Royal, Loyal Stem' (p. 64).

⁵⁶William Pestel, 'An Elegie On the Death of the Right Honourable Henry Lord Hastings; Presented at his Funeral', *Lachrymae Musarum*, pp. 57–58.

⁵⁷Charles Cotton, 'An Elegie upon the Lord Hastings', *Lachrymae Musarum*, p. 12.

exemplified by the aforementioned poems of Herrick, in which print is imagined as a powerful medium in the struggle for cultural continuity. The end of Pestel's poem strikes a familiar note for the volume as a whole, that of imagining Hastings as a model for others:

Cease then, your Grief, and dry your eyes: though hence
He's fled, yet still a great Intelligence
He lives; and will for many ages stand,
For life and Learning, Mirrour of the Land.

Here, Pestel concludes that Hastings's death can have more than simply a negative function, and that the mourners should, as soon as possible, abandon grief for more positive thoughts. These will include remembering Hastings, and modelling future lives on his. Given Hastings's suspected involvement—at a very young age—with Royalist military activity, and his association through this with his heroic uncle, then these lives will, by implication, be ones of an active Royalist nature. Pestel's poem seems to argue for Hastings's death as a catalyst for Royalist gathering and conspiracy, and as a focus for the beginning of a resistance to recent events. Indeed, in a large number of poems in *Lachrymae Musarum* (including Marvell's) collective phrases are rife, suggesting that very many of the contributors envisage the volume as a point of coming together: the dividing line between sighing together and conspiring proves to be a fine one. Even though some individuals within the volume express despair, and their poems themselves represent complex meditations on the Royalist cause and its possible continuation, the volume as a whole still might be read as an act of resistance, as a subtle yet powerful conspiracy against those currently in power.

If the volume is riven with the contradictions inherent in Royalism at the time, then elegy might, in fact, provide a particularly apt commentary on these issues. The writing of elegy always provides its own set of problems, as the ability of language to achieve any kind of adequacy to the occasion is severely tested. These difficulties can be witnessed throughout *Lachrymae Musarum*, as poets ranging from the brilliant to the mediocre struggle with the same fundamental fact that no words can ever be found which offer full or satisfactory recompense for death. All the poets struggle, in other words, to find 'one spring [...] To write my Heart'.⁵⁸ Marvell's poem, however, provides an especially troubled commentary on the problem of

⁵⁸ John Rosse, *Lachrymae Musarum*, p. 62.

elegy, and on the problem—with which *Lachrymae Musarum* is shot through—of writing after the Civil War:

Go, intercept some Fountain in the Vein,
Whose Virgin-Source yet never steeped the Plain.
Hastings is dead, and we must finde a Store
Of tears untoucht, and never wept before.
Go, stand betwixt the *Morning* and the *Flowers*;
And, ere they fall, arrest the early *Showers*.
Hastings is dead; and we, disconsolate,
With early *Tears* must mourn his early *Fate*.
(lines 1–8)

By calling for tears, Marvell insists that only those with personal sorrow for Hastings's death, such as to provoke tears, are able to mourn adequately. Along similar lines, George Fairfax states that 'All sorrow's streams flow not from Pens, but Eyes' (p. 23), buying into the implicit claim in the title of the volume that the poems are, almost literally, the tears of the Muses. However, for Marvell, these tears must be special; the fountain must be 'virgin', the showers 'early', and so on. It is as if, at the outset, the elegy sets itself a difficult standard for 'proper' grief. Indeed, Marvell seems to make the issue of originality and the difficulty of finding the right words the subject of the whole opening section of his poem. He argues that a poet must 'stand betwixt the *Morning* and the *Flowers*; | And, ere they fall, arrest the early *Showers*', which functions as a demand that the elegist must not be second hand or belated. Flowers have particular significance in mourning ritual; as Peter Sacks puts it: 'flowers [...] serve not only as offerings or as gestures for respite but also as demarcations separating the living from the dead'.⁵⁹ And, as Sacks goes on to point out, there are strong parallels between the function of flowers and the function of mourning poetry.⁶⁰ Flowers can represent death (the cutting of the flower) and yet also re-generation, as the flower will be replaced by a new growth next spring.⁶¹ In this way, flowers come to represent an acceptance of death, and yet hint at the rebirth which is to come, both in terms of human life continuing to reproduce itself and, psychologically, for individual mourners who will come to terms with a particular

⁵⁹ Peter Sacks, *The English Elegy*, p. 19.

⁶⁰ Again, evidence abounds for the comparison of flowers and elegies, for example Edward Standish's poem in *Lachrymae Musarum*, p. 15.

⁶¹ John Hall makes this idea clear in his poem 'To the Earl of Huntingdon, On the Death of his Son', when he states that 'A perisht Flower can from the Central fire | That lurks within its seed, next Spring

death. In this way, an elegy is often imagined as a kind of mourning flower as it both reiterates the reality of the death, and yet provides the consolation of the continuity of life. Moreover a *printed* elegy might be an especially effective consolation, given that it offers a potentially enduring monument to the mourned individual.

But Marvell's poem does not allow us to imagine it as a flower that will comfortably, and comfortingly, do this work of mourning. It argues that the flower must be picked before it has opened; it must be a special and unsullied symbol of grief. Moreover—especially if we detect an aural pun on morning/mourning—it insists that the poet must stand between the *mourning* and the flowers, between the need for mourning ritual, and the use of flowers as the usual consolation for grief. The poem must not be like a standard flower of grief; it must be an original and special one. The final line of the section, by balancing 'early *Tears*' with 'early *Fate*' again asserts the unique tragedy of this occasion and thus underwrites the urgent need for original elegiac utterance to do justice to this particular, and early, death; an elegy for an early death might be an especially apt site for such meditations, as it laments the end of a life not yet fully lived. Within this opening, then, the demand for original and fitting elegiac utterance is accompanied by an acceptance that this might not be possible.

If the opening of Marvell's poem might be read as an unusually questioning piece of writing—one which appears to scrutinize elegiac convention more than indulge in it—the section which follows apparently invests more heavily in a traditional notion of gaining recompense for death through elegy. First, it is asserted that Hastings's '*Vertues* did his *Death* presage' (line 9), one of those virtues being his achievement of so much in so few years. This kind of consolation, whereby through dying young the mourned individual proves his or her worth, is not unusual in elegy,⁶² and so Marvell appears to be in step with a conventional, consoling, elegiac practice. He goes on to blame the 'democratic stars' for Hastings's death, attributing it both to his virtues ('all that worth') and the corruption of the world. Further solace,

aspire | Unto its former life and beauty', *Lachrymae Musarum*, pp. 43–44. As we have seen, Marvell plays seriously on flowers and the life cycle of plants in 'The Coronet'.

⁶² The first elegy in *Lachrymae Musarum*, for example, states that 'The best and precious things are soonest gone' (p. 1).

then, is drawn from imagining that Hastings's death was fortuitous, given the tarnished world he has left.

The next such move that the poem makes is, as we have already seen, the imagining of Hastings in a blissful afterlife, in which the young hero 'gladly [...] rejoyces' (lines 39–40). In this afterlife, the emphasis is thus on happiness, and so 'The gods themselves cannot their Joy conceal, | But draw their Veils, and their pure Beams reveal' (lines 41–42). This section of the poem argues, in other words, that Hastings is happier in a world which is more like the Royalist golden age of the 1630s than the corrupt post-war England. This manoeuvre—whereby the afterlife is presented as a consolation for Hastings's death—exhibits a particular type of traditional elegiac thinking, known as rigorism, which, as G.W. Pigman puts it:

prohibits and condemns all grief for those who have died virtuously and are in heaven [...] If a good Christian dies, one should rejoice at the soul's deliverance from this world and its translation to heaven.⁶³

As Pigman has shown, this kind of consolation was widespread in seventeenth-century poetry: to mourn to excess could suggest that one did not believe that the dead were really happy in heaven, and *Lachrymae Musarum* itself provides many instances of this. Rob Millward, for example, demands that we 'cease our Tears: for if we grieve | Too much, too little surely we believe' (p. 8). Similarly, Alex Brome asks, 'why should I lament his death? since he | Loseth not by't' (p. 67). And Francis Standish explicitly links Christianity to a stoical refusal to mourn when he states that "'tis no wonder that a Stoick you | Out-strip; I'd see a Christian thus much do' (p. 25).

The middle section of 'Upon the Death of Lord Hastings' is more generally in step with the consolatory poems in *Lachrymae Musarum* given that the nature of Hastings's afterlife is distinctly Royalist, and to quote in full is to see how this functions as a rigorist, consolatory elegy:

Before the *Chrystal Palace* where he dwells,
The armed *Angels* hold their *Carouzel*s;
And underneath, he views the *Turnaments*
Of all these Sublunary *Elements*.
But most he doth th' *Eternal Book* behold,

⁶³ G.W. Pigman, *Grief and English Renaissance Elegy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 27.

On which the *happie Names* do stand enroll'd;
And gladly there can all his Kinred claim,
But most rejoyces in his *Mothers* name.
(lines 33–40)

In the imagined '*Palace*' and '*Turnaments*', as we have seen, there is an echo of archaic cavalier pursuits, and, given the specifically violent nature of these pursuits, and the mention of 'armed' angels, we may detect hints of the recent Civil War, from the aftermath of which Hastings has luckily escaped.⁶⁴ And before this there is a stronger hint that the poem disapproves of the Parliamentary cause in those wars: Marvell describes the '*Democratick Stars*' which 'rise | And all that Worth from hence did *Ostracize*' (lines 25–6). The word 'democratic' was a term of abuse often used by Royalists against Parliamentarians, and Marchamont Nedham's poem in *Lachrymae Musarum* opens with: 'It is decreed, we must be drain'd (I see) | Down to the dregs of a Democracie'.⁶⁵ Marvell, then, seems to align himself with the Royalists against the Parliamentary 'democrats'. In fact he goes further in blaming the Parliamentarians—who rose and 'did ostracize' everything of worth—for Hastings's death and for the country's troubles more generally.

So do these aspects of the poem—a conventionally rigorist approach to death combined with apparently Royalist sentiment—suggest that 'Upon the Death of Lord Hastings' is, after all, not so different to other, more conventional, poems in *Lachrymae Musarum*? Certainly this section of Marvell's poem, at first glance, sits very comfortably with many traditional elegies in the volume and in the period more generally. It indulges in several conventional elegiac moves, and also, more specifically, in the tradition of rigorism. But the closer we look at Hastings's imagined life in heaven, and the further into Marvell's description we get, the more reservations arise as to the traditional nature and consolatory function of that afterlife. For a start, Hastings's afterlife is a pagan one, in which Greek gods such as Hymeneus and Æsculapius mourn for Hastings rather than rejoice that he is now with them and not on earth. This jars with Pigman's Christian model of grief denial: the

⁶⁴ Margarita Stocker notes the reference to the Civil War in these lines in *Apocalyptic Marvell: The Second Coming in Seventeenth-Century Poetry* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1986), p. 130.

⁶⁵ *Lachrymae Musarum*, p. 81. One of the contributors is identified only as M.N. and it has been assumed that this is Marchamont Nedham. See also Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* for a similarly pejorative use of 'democracy' which echoes Nedham's poem: 'kingly power, thus ebbing out, might be | Drawn to the dregs of a democracy'. Quoted from Paul Hammond (ed.), *The Poems of John Dryden*

afterlife is pagan and grief-stricken rather than happy and Christian. The reference to Hymeneus—the Greek god of marriage—also reminds us of the unique tragedy of a man dying on the eve of his wedding. Because of Hastings’s untimely death this god ‘tears his *Saffron*-coat’ (line 44), and the oblique resonance with the ‘tears’ of the opening—as well as the fact that Hastings’s afterlife is certainly not happy if the gods themselves are violently grief-stricken—serve to refocus attention on the necessity of great earthly mourning which was so powerfully posited in the opening of the poem. The following section explicitly shifts the poem’s gaze earthwards:

And *Æsculapius*, who, asham’d and stern,
Himself at once condemneth, and *Mayern*;
Like some sad *Chymist*, who, prepar’d to reap
The *Golden Harvest*, sees his Glasses leap.
For, how Immortal must their race have stood,
Had *Mayern* once been mixt with *Hastings* blood!
How sweet and Verdant would these *Lawrels* be,
Had they been planted on that *Balsam*-tree!
(lines 47–54)

Mayern was the father of Hastings’s bride-to-be and also one of the most renowned physicians of his day.⁶⁶ By comparing Mayern to an alchemist (‘some sad *Chymist*’), and linking him particularly with that dubious branch of alchemy which sought to make gold, Marvell emphasises the limits of Mayern’s medical powers. John Hall makes a similar point in his poem for Hastings when he laments: ‘Maugre those strong Resistances of Art | Which the wise-pow’rful MAYERN [...] could, like a father, make’ (p. 46). By comparing Mayern to an alchemist, Marvell goes further than Hall, and obliquely echoes the opening of his own poem. Alchemy was crucially concerned with finding extremely pure water as a basis for experiments.⁶⁷ If Mayern is like an alchemist, we might surmise, so is the elegist, in his search for a ‘Virgin-Source’ of water and of ‘Tears untoucht’. In this section, then, poet, physician, and alchemist are all cast as equally doomed to failure, whether their struggle is to delay or to compensate for death. Here the poem all but abandons its attempts at solace: Hastings’s afterlife is beset by powerless mourners, and thus the initial differences

Volume 1 (London: Longman, 1995), p. 475. Hammond notes the echo of Nedham in Dryden’s poem, and states that democracy often implied ‘mob rule’, p. 475.

⁶⁶ Lyndy Abraham, in *Marvell and Alchemy* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1990), charts his career in England, stating that ‘he subsequently became court physician to James I and Charles, and later, Cromwell’s physician’ (p. 18).

⁶⁷ See Gearin-Tosh ‘Marvell’s “Upon the Death of Lord Hastings”’, p. 119.

between heaven and the war-torn England which he has left—which for a moment seemed to interpose a little ease—all but evaporate. We appear to be back at the beginning of the poem where mourning rituals leave everyone, even divine beings, ‘disconsolate’.

As with so much of Marvell’s work, the poem places itself in an impossible position in relation to its subject matter, as if to say anything at all is inappropriate. To move back to the opening of the poem for a moment, we might conclude that rather than being an assertion of the possibility of poetic originality—of finding an untouched source of literary elegiac invention that would be appropriate and fitting—it is a troubled meditation on the possibility of writing anything adequate to a tragic death. In this way, it could be seen as foreshadowing the thoroughgoing anxiety of the ‘modern’ elegy, and this chimes with what we have already seen of the ways in which ‘Tom May’s Death’ has much in common with such elegies. In this case, we might think immediately of the poems of Geoffrey Hill in which the difficulties and anxieties associated with writing about death—especially death in the holocaust—are constantly, and urgently, raised. In ‘Two Formal Elegies (For the Jews in Europe)’, for example, Hill imagines poets as follows:

[...] we grasp, roughly, the song.
Arrogant acceptance from which the song derives
Is bedded with their blood, makes flourish young
Roots in ashes.⁶⁸

Arguing that an elegy for the Jews killed in the holocaust is necessarily ‘Arrogant acceptance’, from which something might ‘flourish’, places the poem itself in an uncomfortable position. If it is asserting its own right not to be considered as a work which ‘Deceives with sweetness harshness’ (line 9), then this is, in the poem’s own terms, an ‘arrogant’ claim. If, on the other hand, the poem asserts that all poetry about the holocaust is necessarily lying and immoral—along the lines of Adorno’s comment that ‘to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric’⁶⁹—then why is the poem written at all? ‘Upon the Death of Lord Hastings’ puts itself in a similarly difficult

⁶⁸ Geoffrey Hill, *Collected Poems* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p. 30, lines 5–8.

⁶⁹ Originally published in 1951, quoted by Lambert Zuidervart, *Adorno’s Aesthetic Theory* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1991), p. 7. Adorno’s next sentence is also interesting—‘And this corrodes even the knowledge of why it has become impossible to write poetry today’ (p. 7)—as it suggests the difficulty of explaining something literary by means of a historical event, however significant that event might be.

position, as if to write lyric poetry after the death of Hastings (and more widely, after the Civil War and execution of the King) is fraught with difficulty, and the possibility that to write at all might be a kind of ‘arrogant acceptance’ of horrific events.

In the richly suggestive final section of his poem, Marvell reconsiders some of the problems raised throughout the poem with renewed complexity and difficulty, in a piece of writing which offers a particularly penetrating commentary on *Lachrymae Musarum* as a whole:

But what could he, good man, although he bruise'd
All Herbs, and them a thousand ways infus'd?
All he had try'd, but all in vain, he saw,
And wept, as we, without Redres or Law.
For *Man* (alas) is but the *Heavens* sport;
And *Art* indeed is Long, but *Life* is Short.
(lines 55–60)

The final couplet—‘For *Man* (alas) is but the *Heavens* sport; | And *Art* indeed is Long, but *Life* is short’—raises particular difficulty in relation to the elegiac issues which the rest of the poem has explored. To read this couplet as a final assertion of consolation is possible, if we take the admission of man’s slavery to the ‘Heavens’ as a rueful acceptance of God’s will. But the parenthetical ‘alas’ seems to be a cry *against* the difficult fact of death—in the face of which we are painfully ‘without Redres’—rather than easy acceptance. With this in mind, it would be more fitting to read the couplet as an angry refusal to accept death, one which will not take easy consolation.

The precise meaning of this couplet, however, hinges on the meaning of ‘art’. In the mid-seventeenth century the word had not yet acquired its now primary meaning in which it describes painting and sculpture (and, perhaps, music and literature) very generally. In fact most of the meanings of the word up until the eighteenth century referred to art in opposition to nature—honed skill as opposed to natural ability. *OED* defines art as ‘skill in doing anything as a result of knowledge and practice’ *OED* (1), and this dates back to the thirteenth century. With this meaning, the ‘art’ referred to is that of Mayern, the father of Hastings’s bride-to-be and an eminent physician of the day. The ‘art’, in this context, is the long-learned art of the knowledgeable man (and the ‘good man’ of line 55), whose practised skill failed to help his prospective son-in-law. Indeed, this line is adapted from

Hippocrates, whose first Aphorism is generally now translated as 'life is short, science is long',⁷⁰ and this echo underscores the reference to Mayern's medical 'art'. And Marvell's insertion of 'indeed' makes clear that this is, in part at least, a knowing reference to this well-known phrase.

In the seventeenth century, however, the word 'art' was also beginning to take on some of the associations we now give the word. *OED* (5) cites a 1620 usage of the word as follows: 'The application of skill to subjects of taste, as poetry, music, dancing, the dramas, oratory, [and] literary composition'. With this in mind, might not the 'art' of the final line be the poetic art of 'Upon the Death of Lord Hastings' itself, and perhaps beyond this, the art of *Lachrymae Musarum* as a whole?⁷¹ If so, what is the poem's attitude to itself and to its wider context within a book of elegies? The couplet on one level presents a final defence of poetic art and elegy, an assertion that despite the fact that life is short, art can give some recompense by its potential durability. As we have seen, this might find resonance in enthusiastic advocacy of print elsewhere in *Lachrymae Musarum* and beyond. But other meanings of 'art' that were coming into usage in the period might alert us to alternative possibilities. *OED* (13) defines art as 'studied conduct or action, especially such as seeks to attain its ends by artificial, indirect, or covert means; [...] cunning artfulness' (first use 1600). *OED* (14) gives the word even more clearly pejorative connotations, defining art as 'An artifice, contrivance, stratagem, vile trick, or cunning device' (first use 1597). If the final line of 'Upon the Death of Lord Hastings' has these connotations, then we might argue that Marvell's view of elegiac art is in fact a rather negative one. The description of art as 'long', in this context, suggests a lack of decorum in taking deceitful contrivance to such length, and the contrast to the brevity of life underlines the lack of tact and propriety in elegising at such length.

In stating that 'art is long', especially given the possible negative connotations of the word *art* which were emerging in the period, Marvell may be

⁷⁰ G.E.R. Lloyd, *Hippocratic Writings* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), p. 206. Previous translations had given the line as 'life is short, and the Art long', for example Francis Adams, *The Genuine Works of Hippocrates* (London: Sydenham Society, 1849), volume 2, p. 697.

⁷¹ This is perhaps also suggested by an early seventeenth century use of the phrase adapted as 'Life is short and learning long', cited by M.P. Tilley in *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950).

launching a critique of elegiac art, with the statement 'life is short' serving to emphasise the impropriety of lengthy poetic utterance in the face of death. Moreover, in an elegy for a man who died at just nineteen years of age, the commonplace 'life is short' becomes loaded with direct reference to this particular short life. In a sense, then, any poem attempting to come to terms with this death might be viewed as being embarrassingly long. Significantly, the moment at which the poem argues that it has said too much is the moment at which it stops, acting on its own command to be tactfully silent in the face of early death. The poem, in other words, enacts the great gap between language and what it tries to represent—between poetic art and death—and it prompts us to meditate, as Marvell's poetry so often does, on the limitations of art itself. Nevertheless, of course, by writing 'Upon the Death of Lord Hastings', Marvell did attempt to say something, however troubled that attempt might have been. To write an elegy at all, even if that writing is sharply self-critical, is in some sense to affirm the necessity of marking a death in words. Especially in the context of Marvell's typical reluctance to print, his decision not just to write this poem but also to publish it might be taken as an assertion of the need to write on this tragic occasion, despite his obvious searching self-questioning within the poem itself. For Marvell, then, elegy becomes both hugely inadequate, and yet wholly necessary.

We have seen in this chapter how Royalist print projects during and after the Civil War played out the pressing difficulties for Royalists, both personal and political, and that these difficulties are explored by Marvell in particularly penetrating ways. To examine these two poems by Marvell in relation to their printed contexts is to see just how alert and intelligent a reader Marvell is, and to see how he, more than other contributors to these volumes, makes the kinds of problems with which these printed volumes were involved, not just forces which control him as a writer, but subjects in their own right. Looking in detail at these volumes shows more strongly than ever that the Civil War was more than simply an event which produced, for writers, the need for political commitment, but was one which asked the most searching of literary questions, and created difficult but compelling problems in the sphere of writing. Marvell contributed to these volumes in an active rather than a passive way, and made the literary-political difficulties with which they were shot through central to what he was doing.

From these observations the question arises concerning the nature of the relationship of these two poems to Marvell's work more widely. They are poems which have too often been glossed over, isolated or ignored, and yet they seem to be poems which ask particularly penetrating questions about the act of writing. What has emerged during the course of this chapter is that these two poems provide the most potent of challenges to the bipolar model of Marvell's writing, the kind of model in which Graham Bradshaw, and others, invest. In being both complex and public they undermine the public/private divide which Bradshaw sets up; in being both Royalist and yet oppositional they argue against a model which dismisses Marvell's 'Royalist' past as politically and poetically anodyne; in being both poetically brilliant and politically charged, they undermine any notion of Marvell which places politics and poetry at odds with each other. These two poems should not be set aside from the rest of Marvell's work, then, but be held up against it by way of illumination, and that illumination should in turn alert us, as critics, to the fact that the categories by which we would dissect Marvell's writing career are all too often ones about which he himself was already thinking intensely.

Chapter 5

‘No Room is Here for Writers Left’: Marvell ‘On *Paradise Lost*’

1. The Critics on Marvell on Milton

In *The Rehearsal Transpros’d* Marvell states, with characteristic reservation about the act of writing, that: ‘whosoever he be that comes in Print whereas he might have sate at home in quiet, does either make a Treat, or send a Challenge to all Readers’ (p. 160). In ‘On *Paradise Lost*’—published as a preface to the second edition of *Paradise Lost* in 1674—Marvell took up, as a reader, Milton’s decision to come into print with *Paradise Lost* as a ‘Challenge’, and he produced in turn a complex, challenging piece of writing which asks testing questions about Milton’s great project. The poem furnishes the most convincing evidence to challenge any notion that, by the Restoration, Marvell had lost his ability to write complex poetry. It suggests instead a writer who maintained his extraordinary poetic subtlety and self-consciousness until near the end of his life. However, this poem is more than just a piece of evidence which questions the facile critical dissection of Marvell’s poetic career: it is itself about the proprieties and possibilities of writing. What kind of view of writing does this poem represent? And, more specifically, what reading of Milton’s *Paradise Lost* does it offer?

Even on a cursory reading, ‘On *Paradise Lost*’ represents a remarkably negative view of writing, or, rather, a series of such views. The initial description of the ‘bold’ (line 1) Milton writing despite his tragic blindness is immediately undercut by doubts about his possible ruining of ‘the sacred Truths’ (line 8), and even about Milton’s vengeful motivations for his work.¹ And the following declaration of Milton’s ‘success’ (line 12) is undermined by the suggestion that the whole project is somewhat ‘vain’ (line 16), perhaps in a familiar Marvellian double sense of ‘self-regarding’ and ‘pointless’. Then, Marvell’s attack on writing moves away from Milton to the unnamed but unmistakable ‘less skilful hand’ (line 18)—John Dryden—who adapted Milton’s poem for the stage. Next, as the ‘Majesty’ (line 31)

¹ ‘On *Paradise Lost*’ is quoted throughout from Margoliouth (as there are no significant variants between the poem published in 1674 and the 1681 folio text, see Margoliouth I, p. 336), but I use the original 1674 title of the poem.

of Milton's work is copiously praised, the writing of anything after *Paradise Lost* is declared to be impossible ('No room is here for Writers left, | But to detect their Ignorance or Theft', lines 29–30), before Marvell turns his fire on himself for an extended meditation on the problems of his own medium—rhymed verse. Milton, by contrast, goes to some lengths to justify his decision *not* to rhyme, just as he painstakingly defends his artistic practice in his short essay on 'That Sort of Dramatic Poem Which is Called Tragedy' which introduces *Samson Agonistes*.² This contrasting approach argues again for a fundamental difference between Marvell and Milton (and, indeed, between Marvell and many of his contemporaries): Milton is a confident writer who repeatedly seeks to defend his own writerly decisions; Marvell constantly subjects his own and others' writing to searching question and even censure.³

However, many critics have viewed Marvell's poem as more or less an uncomplicated panegyric, or one which would 'help to sell the book'.⁴ G.F. Parker, for example, describes Marvell's poem as 'a wonderfully tactful mediation between the poem [*Paradise Lost*] and its Restoration readership'.⁵ Although Parker is sensitive to the difficulties of this literary encounter, given the sharp criticisms of writing outlined above—from which Milton certainly does not escape unscathed—his notion of the poem as 'wonderfully tactful' needs re-thinking. Rather, it could be argued that 'On *Paradise Lost*' is a poem which, far from being deliberately tactful and appropriate, actually makes a point of raising, and to some degree endorsing, the most damning and scandalous interpretations of Milton's poem imaginable. This idea is not without critical precedent: critics have noted that the opening of Marvell's poem posits various worries and concerns about the scope and possibly dangerous nature of *Paradise Lost*, but have been keen to point out that this is a subversive reading that Marvell firmly contains by the end of his poem. So, for example,

² Milton links himself there to tragedy 'as it was anciently composed' (line 1), mounting a 'self defence' (line 32) of his practice. He concludes that: 'In the modelling therefore of this poem, with good reason, the ancients and Italians are rather followed, as of much more authority and fame' (lines 37–39). Quoted from John Carey (ed.), *The Minor Poems*, pp. 344–345.

³ A.D. Nuttall characterises Milton's confidence well when he suggests that 'In Milton's project [*Paradise Lost*] we may see both courage and a certain conscious brutality, characteristic of the later Renaissance' in *Overheard By God: Fiction and Prayer in Herbert, Milton, Dante and St John* (London: Methuen, 1980), p. 85.

⁴ Michael Craze, *The Life and Lyrics of Andrew Marvell*, p. 312.

⁵ G.F. Parker, 'Marvell on Milton: Why the Poem Rhymes Not' in *Cambridge Quarterly* 20 (1991), pp. 183–209, p. 183.

Kenneth Gross notices Marvell's initial worries about *Paradise Lost* only to conclude that: 'The poet of *Paradise Lost* is ultimately absolved of both crimes'.⁶ This too is, I would suggest, an inadequate overall view of a sometimes disturbingly hostile encounter between two of the most accomplished—but radically different—poets of the mid-seventeenth century. How do these views deal with the fact that, for example, the blind Milton is compared to the revenging Samson, who 'groap'd the Temples Posts in spight | The world o'rewhelming to revenge his Sight' (lines 9–10), echoing familiar Royalist satires against Milton?⁷ And how do they account for the fact (not, as far as I am aware, previously noticed) that the language Marvell uses to describe Milton is strikingly similar to that which Milton reserves for his descriptions of Satan?

In fact, the critical silence on the resonances between the two poems—*Paradise Lost* and 'On *Paradise Lost*'—has been remarkable. Kenneth Gross, promisingly, notes that Marvell 'continually adapts dramatic stances, metaphors, key words [...] which derive from the author's [Milton's] major poetry'⁸ but, perhaps strangely, does not notice the major echoes of *Paradise Lost* itself in Marvell's poem. The closest he comes to similar observations to the ones that I shall elaborate here are when he notes that 'by an allusive stroke worthy of William Blake Marvell aligns Dryden's presumptuous, neoclassical dramaturgy with the temptations of a de-based Hellenism which Satan offers the Son' (pp. 86–87). This is, though, a relatively tortuous point, and it is *Paradise Regained* that Gross is talking about here, rather than *Paradise Lost* itself, which, one might assume, should be a more important source of allusion in a poem specifically addressed to that work.⁹ Similarly, Sharon

⁶ Kenneth Gross "Pardon me, Mighty Poet": Versions of the Bard in Marvell's "On Mr. Milton's *Paradise Lost*" in *Milton Studies* 16 (1982), pp. 77–96, p. 79. See also Joseph Antony Wittreich, Jr, who states that Marvell's poem is 'a timely defence of Milton composed by a loyal friend', 'Perplexing the Explanation: Marvell's "On Mr Milton's *Paradise Lost*"' in C.A. Patrides (ed.), *Approaches To Marvell*, pp. 280–305, p. 297. More recently, Barbara Lewalski, in her biography of Milton, concludes that Marvell's poem is 'highly laudatory' and that Marvell 'offers a fitting tribute to Milton, and in doing so defends individuality and inspiration wherever found', *The Life of John Milton* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 509–510.

⁷ This seems to be particularly damning criticism, even though Marvell somewhat makes amends later in the poem by rearticulating Milton's 'loss of Sight' (line 44) as a reward for his '*Prophesie*' (line 44).

⁸ Gross, "Pardon me, Mighty Poet": Versions of the Bard in Marvell's "On Mr. Milton's *Paradise Lost*", pp. 77–78.

⁹ That this striking aspect of Marvell's poem has not been noted before is suggestive of the sometimes problematic divisions of labour in seventeenth century studies: those Marvell scholars who write about the poem do so mainly in relation to the rest of Marvell's work, paying little attention to how the poem

Achinstein notes the interesting resonances between Marvell's and Milton's use of the word 'perplex' but does not investigate other resonances between the works, going on to give a somewhat conventional overall reading of Marvell's poem.¹⁰ It is as if 'On *Paradise Lost*' has scarcely been read as what it claims to be: a detailed and critical meditation on *Paradise Lost*.

What follows argues that the view of writing exhibited in Marvell's poem is, like much else already discussed in this thesis, deeply ambivalent. And whether Marvell ultimately approves of Milton's grand 'project' or not, his view of the possibilities for writing *after* or about Milton's masterpiece are consistently negative. I also argue that the reading of *Paradise Lost* is far more subversive than has been previously recognised: by a complex series of verbal and thematic resonances, Marvell links Milton to Satan and *Paradise Lost* to Satan's works, in a reading of poem and poet which foreshadows Blake's radically 'Satanic' take on the poem, in which he concluded that Milton, as a 'true Poet', was 'of the Devil's party without knowing it'.¹¹ Does Marvell here imply, like Blake, that poetry might be highly suspect or even 'of the Devil's party'? And are these subversive resonances ones which Marvell contains, or attempts to contain, by the end of his poem?

2. Marvell and Milton: A Literary and Political Friendship

In February 1653, Milton found himself in need of an assistant in his post of Latin Secretary. He wrote to John Bradshaw to promote Marvell's candidacy for the position:¹²

to morrow upon some occasion of business a Gentleman whose name is Mr. Marvile; a man whom both by report, and the converse I have had with him, of singular desert for the State to make use of; who alsoe offers himselfe, if there be any imployment for him. His father was the minister of Hull and he hath spent foure yeares abroad in Holland, France, Italy, and Spaine, to very good purpose, as I

functions as a reading of *Paradise Lost*, whilst Milton scholars tend to gloss over the poem rather briefly.

¹⁰ She declares, finally, that 'Marvell applauds Milton for not making things too difficult' (in what is, to my mind, a misreading of lines 11–16 of the poem) in *Milton and the Revolutionary Reader* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 211–212.

¹¹ William Blake, 'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell', extract reprinted in Scott Elledge (ed.), *Paradise Lost* (London: Norton, 1993), p. 493.

¹² For a more detailed (and at times speculative) account of the possible relationship between Marvell and Milton, see Christopher Hill, 'Milton and Marvell' in C.A. Patrides (ed.), *Approaches to Marvell*, especially pp. 5–6.

beleeve, and the gaineing of those four languages; besides he is a scholler and well read in the latin and Greeke authors, and noe doubt of an approved conversation; for he com's now lately out of the house of the Lord Fairefax who was Generall, where he was instructed to give some instructions in the Languages to the Lady his Daughter [...] it would be hard for them to find a Man soe fit in every way for that purpose as this Gentleman [...] This my Lord I write sincerely without any other end than to performe my duty to the Publick in helping them to an able servant; laying aside those Jealousies and that aemulation which mine owne condition might suggest to me by bringing in such a coajutor.¹³

It is clear enough from this evidence that Milton thought very highly of Marvell, personally and professionally, and it also suggests that by this point Milton knew Marvell reasonably well, as he demonstrates knowledge of Marvell's family, abilities, and major movements in the last decade. Although Milton claims to have had 'converse with him', his subsequent assertion that Marvell is '*noe doubt* of an approved conversation; for he com's now lately out of the house of the Lord Fairefax' (my emphasis) suggests that his personal knowledge of Marvell's conversation is not especially detailed. We get the sense, then, of an older civil servant promoting a younger man he has met infrequently, and about whom he has heard a great deal of good.¹⁴ There is also, however, a suspicion, in Milton's rather tortuous final clause, of wariness of Marvell on Milton's part. Milton is at pains to point out the neutrality of his decision to promote Marvell, but the way in which he does this—by mentioning the possibility of emulative jealousy developing between the two of them—argues that the conjectured presence of this brilliant young man was a source of a certain amount of anxiety. Milton's slightly obscure sentence hints that his recommendation of Marvell is selfless because, given that Milton himself is blind, he has cause to worry that this assistant might prove so competent as to threaten his own position. This possibility is also suggested by the double meaning of 'coajutor', as either an assistant or as an associate. We might even think here, with Milton's mention of 'aemulation' of Marvell's lines in 'An Horatian Ode'—''tis all one to Courage high | The Emulous or Enemy' (lines 17–18)—and wonder if there might be the slightest hint of potential rivalry between these two future friends.

In the event, of course, this letter failed to procure Marvell the position as Milton's Assistant. Marvell did not secure official employment until September 1657, when he became Latin Secretary to the Commonwealth, by which point

¹³ Reproduced in Donno (ed.), *The Critical Heritage*, pp. 99–100.

¹⁴ Milton was thirteen years Marvell's senior.

Milton, though still working for the government, had lost his senior position.¹⁵ In 1654, however, Marvell wrote to Milton mentioning gratefully what he describes as Milton's 'Letter to my Advantage'. Marvell's letter contains his first critical comments on a piece of writing by Milton, and it is a letter which, interestingly, begins with a criticism of Marvell's own written account (since lost) of a meeting between himself and Bradshaw. Marvell describes his embarrassments over his visit, in which he worries that Bradshaw will think that a recent letter from Milton might be another recommendation of himself:

But my Lord read not the Letter while I was with him, which I attributed to our Despatch, and some other Businesse tending thereto, which I therefore wished ill to, so farr as it hindred an affaire much better and of greater Importance: I mean that of reading your Letter. And to tell you truly mine own Imagination, I thought that He would not open it while I was there, because He might suspect that I delivering it just upon my Departure might have brought in it some second Proposition like to that which you had before made to him by your letter to my Advantage.¹⁶

Here, Marvell is seen carefully dealing with his social and political superiors: this letter, then, reminds us that Marvell was not, at this stage, on a level footing with Milton in terms of political influence and power. On the contrary, he was dependent on the generosity of men such as Milton, Bradshaw, Cromwell and Fairfax for his living. The way in which this political inequality plays itself out—to Marvell's obvious embarrassed discomfort—is through the exchange of letters and books—through the written word. In this context it is little surprise that Marvell saw his own writing, in contrast to the powerful and politically effective words of men such as Milton and Bradshaw, as powerless and ineffective; Marvell's letter opens with the typically self-deprecating assertion that, in a previous letter, 'I did not satisfie my self in the Account I gave you' (p. 305). Indeed, Marvell sets criticism of the incompleteness of his own written account against rapturous praise about the fullness of Milton's book, the *Defensio Secunda*:

Mr Oxenbridge at his Returne from London will I know give you thanks for his Book, as I do with all Acknowledgement and Humility for that you have sent me. I shall now studie it even to the getting of it by Heart: esteeming it according to my poor Judgement (which yet I wish it were so right in all Things else) as the most compendious Scale, for so much, to the Height of the Roman eloquence. When I consider how equally it turnes and rises with so many figures, it seems to me a

¹⁵ See Legouis, *Poet, Puritan, Patriot*, pp. 108–109.

¹⁶ Margoliouth II, p. 305.

Trajans colume in whose winding ascent we see imboss'd the severall Monuments
of your learned victoryes.¹⁷

The nature and manner of Marvell's praise is suggestive. Marvell sets the fullness ('compendious Scale') of Milton's work against the incompleteness of a piece of writing of his own ('I did not satisfy myself in the account I gave you'). Moreover, he is scathing about his own 'poor Judgement' and stands with 'Humility' before Milton's great work, vowing to learn it by heart. The comparison with Trajan's column is especially interesting, as it provides one of the few instances in Marvell's career of his imagining writing to be something which might be a permanent, monumental achievement; this is a seventeenth century commonplace in which Marvell rarely unambiguously indulges. But the precise nature of the imagined monument is significant, and extends the praise of Milton still further. Trajan's column in fact contains not writing but pictures, and those pictures celebrate military rather than artistic success. So this comparison suggests that Marvell (echoing sentiments expressed in the Villiers and Cromwell elegies) sees Milton's success as a political writer as all but equal to a military achievement, and that his artistic supremacy almost moves his writing into the impressive realm of civic, visual art. This certainly suggests a powerful, permanent model for writing as a hugely effective political force, and might lend credence to recent arguments—particularly those of Annabel Patterson—which propose effectiveness as a model for Marvell's writing. Importantly, though—as in his poem to Dr Witty where, in contrast to Witty's own work, Marvell argues that his own writing deserves to burn—the extraordinarily monumental nature of Milton's work serves also as a stark contrast to Marvell's own incomplete and uncertain writing; as is so often the case with Marvell, the remarkable writing comes from someone else's pen.

If this kind of formulation betrays signs of Milton's seniority to Marvell, after the Restoration the relationship was radically altered by political circumstances. Milton faced an anxious wait in the summer of 1660 to learn if he would be unfortunate enough to be one of those exempted from the general pardon which Charles II offered upon his accession to the throne.¹⁸ Several of his close associates in the Interregnum government lost their lives or their liberty and Milton had to go

¹⁷ Margoliouth II, p. 306.

¹⁸ See Lewalski, *The Life of John Milton*, pp. 398–405.

into hiding for a time whilst his friends, Marvell certainly among them, negotiated on his behalf.¹⁹ Milton did have some of his works burned and, somewhat surprisingly, was arrested and imprisoned for a short time. Marvell again stepped in, arguing in Parliament that the prison fee which Milton was charged was excessive. In this period, and for the rest of Milton's life, Marvell, as a member of Parliament, was the man in a position of power and Milton was not only relatively powerless, but was somewhat in Marvell's debt for his personal liberty and safety; their positions on the Restoration of the monarchy were, then, politically and personally reversed.

In 1673, when Marvell wrote the second part of *The Rehearsal Transpros'd*, he again found himself in a position of defending Milton, this time from the insults of Samuel Parker:

You do three times at least in your *Reproof*, and in your *Transproser Rehears'd* well nigh half the book thorow, run upon an Author J.M. which does not a little offend me. For why should any other mans reputation suffer in a contest betwixt you and me? [...] by chance I had not seen him of two years before; but after I undertook writing, I did more carefully avoid either visiting or sending to him, least I should in any way involve him in my consequences.²⁰

This tells us that Marvell's relationship with Milton at this time was so politically charged that they could not even meet, or at least that Marvell could not admit to their meeting. Marvell goes on to tackle the extremely politically delicate issue of Milton's former commitment to the revolutionary cause:

J.M was, and is, a man of great Learning and Sharpness of wit as any man. It was his misfortune, living in a tumultuous time, to be toss'd on the wrong side, and he writ *Flagrante bello* certain dangerous Treatises. (p. 312)

Although clearly defending Milton, this comment indicates the political tact needed at this time. Marvell depicts Milton's political cause as the 'wrong' one and is careful to distance himself from any direct political association with him. He even tries (in a manner somewhat reminiscent of T.S. Eliot's comments on the issue) to distance Milton himself from his own political position by removing agency from Milton, putting it instead on circumstances which, through 'misfortune', 'toss'd' him on the wrong side in the conflict. Marvell also describes Milton's activity since 'His

¹⁹ Edward Phillips stated that Marvell 'acted vigorously in his behalf, and made a considerable party for him', quoted in Lewalski, p. 400.

²⁰ Smith, *R.T.*, pp. 311–312.

Majesties happy Return', at which Marvell records: '*J.M.* did partake, even as you your self did for all your huffing, of his Regal Clemency and has even since expiated himself in a retired silence' (p. 312). This is Marvell taking tact on Milton's behalf to extremes, because Milton may have been politically neutralised in this period, but he was certainly not silent as in 1667, six years prior to this comment from Marvell, he had published the first edition of *Paradise Lost*. When the second, twelve-book version was published, the year after the second part of *The Rehearsal Transpros'd*, Marvell wrote his famous prefatory poem, which amounts to the culmination of this most vexed and important of literary friendships.

3. 'Thy Verse [...] Needs Not Rhyme': Marvell, Milton and the Question of Rhyme

For all this complex, often politically charged, history between Marvell and Milton, one of the most pressing concerns for Marvell writing about *Paradise Lost* was one of poetic form: he himself wrote in rhymed verse, whilst Milton wrote blank pentameters. In the final section of his poem 'On *Paradise Lost*', Marvell launches what might seem an extraordinary (and yet characteristic) attack on his own rhymed verse:

Well mightst thou scorn thy Readers to allure
With tinkling Rhime, of thy own Sense secure;
While the *Town-Bays* writes all the while and spells,
And like a Pack-Horse tires without his Bells.
Their Fancies like our bushy Points appear,
The Poets tag them; we for fashion wear.
I too transported by the *Mode* offend,
And while I meant to *Praise* thee, must Commend.
Thy verse created like thy *Theme* sublime,
In Number, Weight, and Measure, needs not *Rhime*.
(lines 45–54)

The ostensible purpose of Marvell's self-deprecation is to praise Milton's poem and in particular his use of blank verse. This section of the poem, then, conforms to Marvell's own previous formulation of good writing—'Who best could prayse, had then the greatest prayse, | Twas more esteemed to give, than weare the

Bayes'²¹—given that Marvell is praising Milton; he is giving him the bays rather than, as a bad poet would, trying to claim them for himself. This poem is, then, the exact opposite of a poem such as 'Tom May's Death' in which Marvell, alarmingly, fails to live up to his own poetic ideals. This might seem to be a politic move, given that Milton himself makes something of the issue in a famous note at the beginning of *Paradise Lost*:

The measure is English heroic verse without rhyme, as that of Homer in Greek and Virgil in Latin; rhyme being no necessary adjunct or true ornament of poem or good verse, in longer works especially, but the invention of a barbarous age, to set off wretched matter and lame meter [...] This neglect then of rhyme so little is to be taken for a defect, though it may seem so perhaps to vulgar readers, that it rather is to be esteemed an example set, the first in English, of ancient liberty recovered to heroic poem from the troublesome and modern bondage of rhyming.²²

Might we read Marvell's attack on rhyme as an act of deference to Milton, both to the form in which Milton chose to write his long poem, and to this explicit attack on rhyme which Marvell presumably knew would sit close to his own poem in this particular publication?²³ This is almost certainly one aspect of what Marvell is doing: to write in rhyming couplets in such a context *without* any mention of rhyme would suggest a lack of self-consciousness uncharacteristic of Marvell. However, as the scarcely disguised hostility of Milton's own comments suggest, the issue of rhyme goes far beyond simply a matter of personal taste. Milton's 'barbarous age', though ostensibly referring to Latin writers of the Middle Ages,²⁴ also carries implications of the decadence of Royalist culture before the Civil War ('Cavalier' poets, of course, were associated with rhymed verse) and, by extension, the present restored Royalist age, in which couplets were again fashionable.²⁵

This issue, then, must have cast Marvell's mind back to the Civil War era, at which time not only was he himself very much involved in Royalist poetry, but also Royalist verse practice was first beginning to be linked to a particular political

²¹ 'To His Noble Friend Mr. Richard Lovelace, upon his Poems', lines 7–8.

²² Scott Elledge (ed.), *Paradise Lost*, p. 6. All quotations from *Paradise Lost* will be from this edition.

²³ Marvell's poem was published in the second edition of *Paradise Lost*; Milton's attack on rhyme also appeared for the first time in this second edition so it is possible that Marvell knew that his poem was going to be published alongside Milton's own comments on rhyme.

²⁴ Elledge (ed.), *Paradise Lost*, note on p. 6.

²⁵ As Christopher Hill puts it: 'Rhyme in drama and long poems was a political issue: favoured by Charles II and the court, rhyme was attacked by Buckingham', 'Milton and Marvell', p. 23.

grouping. To give an extreme example, 'The Digger's Song' identifies rhyme and the Royalists in a particularly negative way:

The Cavaleers are foes, stand uppe now, stande uppe now,
The Cavaleers are foes, stand uppe now
The Cavaleers are foes, themselves they do disclose
by verses nott in prose, To please the singing boyes
Stand uppe now diggers all.²⁶

The sense of self-disclosure through literary style in this poem is powerful. The Cavaliers are foes—a point that the poem argues, paradoxically, through powerful, ringing rhymes between 'foes', 'disclose' and 'prose'—who give away their pernicious politics by the way they write. This is a political rallying cry, in other words, which insists that literary and political styles are interwoven. To set Marvell's poem to Milton in this context, we might detect an acute embarrassment about the possible 'disclosure' of Marvell's own literary-political origins by writing in rhyme. In a less extreme way than the Diggers, Milton associates rhyme with a tradition against which he wishes to set himself, both politically and in terms of literary lineage. Milton, as a supporter and defender of the Republic—though coming from a very different direction to the Diggers—was keen to create a mode of writing opposed to this Royalist tradition, and therefore his decision *not* to use rhyme is a political as well as an artistic one.²⁷ It seems characteristic that Marvell should be painfully aware of the oddity of writing to Milton in a mode which, in the world of the Civil War—during which both men came of age as writers—would be seen, pejoratively, as being associated with Royalism.

However, before going into this further, it is worth noticing the extraordinary complexity of what Marvell actually says about rhyme in the final section of his poem. The closing words of each couplet are a site of great tension between form and content. The rhyme-making 'secure' is a very 'secure' and satisfying, and alluring, rhyme for 'allure', and yet what the poem gives in sound it takes away in sense. It is doing one thing and saying another: such a rhyme is a subject for 'scorn'; a mere

²⁶ In David Norbrook and H.R. Woodhuysen (eds), *The Penguin Book of Renaissance Verse, 1509–1659* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), p. 466. Woodhuysen tentatively gives this poem at 1649. Peter Davidson points out that the relation of this 'Song' to rhyme is somewhat odd, given that it expresses disapproval of verse in (semi-) rhymed verses (*Poetry and Revolution*, p. xlv).
²⁷ Milton himself, of course, had used rhyming verse extensively early in his poetic career, and it is Marvell's continued use of rhyme as it contrasts with Milton's move to something different which is interesting here.

‘tinkling’ sound designed to ‘allure’ and therefore something which is very far from being ‘secure’. And yet the power with which Marvell makes this point is to a large extent dependent on the very thing—rhyme—which is under attack. The next couplet (‘While the *Town-Bays* writes all the while and spells, | And like a Pack-Horse tires without his Bells’) is perhaps still more unsettling, as the metaphor by which rhyme is imagined is completed on a rhyming word (‘bells’) and again associated entirely with negative images: the ‘Pack-Horse’ the ‘*Town-Bays*’, and, by extension, associated also with John Dryden and perhaps rhyming poets in general.²⁸ Yet again, though, the medium by which this powerful image *against* rhyme is created is rhyme itself, and rhyme is a powerful part of making that argument stick. As readers we are left in an impossible position: to agree with what is being said about rhyme is, in some sense to be ‘transported by the *Mode*’ or to be bewitched by mere ‘tinkling’. This is very much the criticism which Marvell makes of himself in the penultimate couplet of the poem (‘I too transported by the *Mode* offend, | And while I meant to *Praise* thee, must Commend’), which argues powerfully, in rhyme, that rhyme spoils the sense, as it changes Marvell’s stance from one of admiration to one of mere commendation. But equally this couplet, with its enormous wit and artistry, suggests a poet utterly in control of his own medium, one who can make rhyme do anything, against his ostensible suggestion that rhyme is a hindrance. Does this hint at the fact that to ‘commend’ is all Marvell really *wants* to do?²⁹ The final couplet (‘Thy verse created like thy *Theme* sublime, | In Number, Weight, and Measure, needs not *Rhime*’) is something of a *coup de grace*, seemingly what this section of the poem has been leading up to: the making of a rhyme on the word ‘rhyme’, which is itself

²⁸ Dryden asked Milton’s permission to make *Paradise Lost* into a rhymed verse play: Milton is reported to have replied: ‘Well, Mr. Dryden, it seems you have a mind to tag my points, and you have leave to tag them’ (Quoted by Wittreich, ‘Perplexing the Explanation’, p. 288). This might explain Marvell’s line ‘The Poets tag them; we for fashion wear’ (line 50). Wittreich himself questions whether ‘*Town-Bays*’ refers specifically to Dryden, arguing that it probably means simply ‘rhymsters generally’ (p. 289).

²⁹ Ann Bayes Coiro suggests that the final lines of the poem have ‘a destabilising hint of mockery for Milton and his sublime’ in ‘The Achievement of Andrew Marvell’ in Claude Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (eds), *On The Celebrated and Neglected Poems of Andrew Marvell* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1992), pp. 238–242, p. 238. Wittreich, on the other hand, finds greater eulogy in ‘commend’ than ‘praise’ (‘Perplexing the Explanation’, pp. 286–287), an argument which I do not find entirely convincing, as in most relevant usages, the *OED* gives ‘commend’ as clearly less positive than ‘praise’. *OED* (3) is the most positive, and has ‘commend’ as ‘to mention as worthy of acceptance or approval, to express approbation of, praise, extol’. Others are less excessive, and suggest mere approval. Praise is always more unequivocal and enthusiastic, and often, for example *OED* (2), has religious overtones.

the completing word of an argument against rhyme. The final line, then, which is, if not 'sublime', then at least highly effective in its number, weight, and measure—and made all the more so for its final brilliant use of rhyme—is a resolutely strange end to a poem which, in what we have seen to be a characteristically Marvellian fashion, puts itself in a very uncomfortable position in relation to its own poetic form.

How does this relate to the fact that rhyme itself has, as we have seen, significant political implications? In one sense, Marvell dodges the issue: he writes in rhyme so could not be accused of being entirely on Milton's side on the matter, or of ostentatiously bucking the Royalist tradition of rhyme, as Milton does. On the other hand, he attacks rhyme—and Dryden, one of rhyme's major exponents—so is therefore exempt from the charge that his tribute is a simply a political attack on Milton disguised as a literary tribute. This is not, in other words, a Royalist reading of *Paradise Lost*, which argues that the epic would have been better and more politically acceptable had it been written in rhyming couplets.³⁰ Neither is it, on the other hand, an uncomplicated gesture of solidarity with Milton: it hovers between these two possibilities. This kind of political slipperiness is, of course, typical of Marvell, and is more particularly akin to Marvell's reticence, in *The Rehearsal Transpros'd*, about Milton's (and his own) politics in the Interregnum

However, 'On *Paradise Lost*' is not simply a political assessment of Milton—it is, significantly, a poem written about a work of poetry, rather than a work of prose concerning politics—and so we might also notice that, as in much of Marvell's poetry, it might be read as a meditation on how one might write about politics, and the extent to which politics impinges upon poetry. By making rhyme an insurmountable barrier between the poets—one which, according to Marvell, means that he must change the nature of his tribute from a eulogy to a commendation—perhaps he also highlights the present political barriers between himself and Milton. He seems to point out the fact that such differences are so serious that they *cannot* be resolved in poetry. And yet, in achieving this strange tribute, in which rhyme is both used effectively and also criticised, Marvell hints at the ways in which poetry can transcend such political differences. For Marvell,

³⁰ See Lewalski, *The Life of John Milton*, p. 508, for an account of how Dryden's 'opera' of *Paradise Lost* twists its politics to make it a Royalist statement against rebellion.

poetry is both limited and powerful: powerful in that it enacts a momentary bringing together of irreconcilable opposites; limited in its recognition that this reconciliation is a piece of momentary, artful magic, not something 'out there' in the world of politics.

4. 'Misdoubting His Intent': The Attack on Milton

The opening of Marvell's poem, in contrast to its self-deprecating ending—and its eulogistic middle section—might be read as a negative critique of Milton's project. In particular—and, as I have suggested, this has not previously been noted—the language which Marvell uses of Milton and his poetic work corresponds closely to that which Milton himself uses to describe Satan and his various plots and plans.³¹ Indeed, computer concordancing confirms what is suspected on a reading of *Paradise Lost*: some of the key words Marvell uses to describe Milton are ones which Milton employs to describe Satan. According to Literature Online, the word 'bold', for example, is used twenty-four times by Milton in *Paradise Lost*, only six of which do not directly describe Satan or one of his cohorts.³² Of these six, only two actually describe 'good' angels, whilst the other four either echo Satan (for example Eve's 'bold deed' of Book IX, line 921); or are used by Satan's peers. The word 'design' is used seven times, five of which describe Satan's evil designs on Mankind. The other two usages do not contradict this: one of them is in a metaphor of bodies 'design'd for death' (Book X) and the other ('design'd) is used by God, and in a different sense, to express the idea of pre-destination. Thus the sense of 'design' as a noun—a particular project—is linked in Milton's poem to Satan's project to corrupt mankind. 'Vain' occurs thirty-nine times, sixteen of which attach to Satan or his peers, and most of the others relate to the Fall and its consequences; in this way, Milton has tilted the linguistic playing field such that these words become especially associated with the 'wrong' side in his poem. These statistics are illuminating, but of course do not tell the whole story. The following discussion, structured as a close reading of the

³¹ Although Nigel Smith has told me that he has independently found some echoes, soon to be published in his Longman edition of Marvell's poetry, between the two poems.

³² See the Chadwyck-Healy Literature Online database.

first section of Marvell's poem, examines some key examples of the context in which Milton uses these words in *Paradise Lost*.

Milton's Bold Design

When I beheld the Poet blind, yet bold,
In slender Book his vast Design unfold.
(lines 1–2)

This is itself a typically Marvellian opening to a poem of praise, highlighting, as it does, the act of writing and the physical object which will be created through that writing. It is also resonant with Marvell's observation, in *Mr. Smirke*, that his opponent does 'any thing to stuffe out the dimensions of a book, that no man may imagine he could have said so little in so much'.³³ In 'On *Paradise Lost*' Marvell argues precisely the opposite about Milton, that he manages to say a huge amount in what is a relatively physically small book.³⁴ Also, we might notice that, although these lines appear, at first glance, to be critically neutral (or in comparison to his attack in *Mr. Smirke*, positive), on closer inspection, there are certain negative overtones. The use of 'yet' hints that the poet's 'boldness' in the face of this blindness might be foolhardy, as if he is forging ahead *despite* his blindness. The second line might suggest the difficulty, even absurdity of the project attempted, contrasting as it does the physical, limited reality of the book, with the huge scale of that which Milton attempts. And what of the word 'design'? Although the *OED* cites the first clearly pejorative usages of *design* in 1704,³⁵ it is possible that the word was taking on such negative connotations earlier than this, and the following discussion might lend weight to this possibility.

In *Paradise Lost*, 'bold' and 'design' are words which are repeatedly used by Milton to describe Satan and his actions. For example, during the council in hell, the plan—to corrupt God's new plan to create mankind—devised by Satan and delivered by his elder statesman Beelzebub, is described thus:

[...] the bold design
Pleased highly those infernal States, and joy

³³ *Mr. Smirke: Or, The Divine in Mode* in Grosart IV, p. 46.

³⁴ Also suggestive here is the fact that the second edition of *Paradise Lost* (printed in octavo) was physically smaller than the first (quarto) edition.

³⁵ *OED* 'design' (1b) cites Locke in 1704 as the first use of the word in this way.

Sparkled in all their eyes.
(Book II, lines 386–388)

So here ‘design’ refers specifically to the evil plan, the central subject of Christian mythology, which Satan puts in place after his expulsion from heaven. Moreover, boldness is seen as an important characteristic—one which allows the execution of the plan. Also, Satan is described as ‘bold’ twice in the opening of Book IV, first in ‘The Argument’ where he is about to ‘attempt the bold enterprise’ and then, early in that book, the difficulty of what he is about to attempt is contrasted with his ‘bold’ (line 13) plan to carry it through.³⁶ So it is both the planning and the execution of the fall of man which is ‘bold’ in Milton’s vocabulary. This might prove an important duality in Marvell’s use of the word, in that he might be seen both to fear this project, as it were, *a priori*—simply as a potentially wickedly bold idea—and in its execution as a dangerous, boldly foolish enterprise.

In Book V ‘bold’ is used in a slightly different way, to refer specifically to language. Eve describes her dream vision of Satan as follows:

[...] with vent’rous arm
He plucked, he tasted; me damp horror chilled
At such bold words vouched with a deed so bold.
(Book V, lines 64–66)

The bold deed here is the prior enactment of the fall of mankind itself, and a key initial stage in the persuasion of Eve to enjoy the fruit of the tree of knowledge. More than this, words are seen as crucial—words which are backed by deeds. This echo enforces the sense of boldness as inextricably linked to the complex causes of the Fall, and also suggests a strong link between words and deeds, suggesting that in some sense bold (and wicked) words are a prerequisite for bold deeds.³⁷ If this echo feeds into Marvell’s poem then it enforces the idea that Milton’s bold design of words might be itself highly implicated in the myth which it describes.

³⁶ It is also interesting that later in Book IV Satan, whilst marvelling over Adam and Eve, and considering a possible ‘mutual amity’ (line 376) with them, imagines that ‘hell shall *unfold*’ (line 382, my italics) to receive them. It is suggestive that Marvell chooses a word to describe *Paradise Lost* which Milton had used to describe the opening of hell to mankind, as if the poem is in some ways complicit in the fall of man.

³⁷ See also Book V, in which Satan’s words in heaven are described as ‘bold discourse without control’ (line 803) by Raphael. With the sense of Milton being ‘blind yet bold’, is there a hint of this kind of recklessness and lack of control in Marvell’s image of Milton? Also, in Book IX, Satan is described as ‘voluble and bold’ (line 436), again forging a link between ‘boldness’ and language.

Inevitably, the question arises of the extent to which Marvell was consciously and deliberately calling these things to the reader's mind given that one of his readers (probably the first) would have been John Milton himself. This is perhaps answered by a particular kind of echoing which takes place between the poems. Later in Book V, when God observes Satan's designs on Man, he describes to Raphael how Satan 'designs | In them at once to ruin all mankind' (lines 227–228), we get the kind of double echoing between the poems which suggests that Marvell knew what he was doing when he chose the language for the first section of his poem. Ruin is, of course, what Marvell fears Milton will do to the 'sacred Truths' by putting them into verse; the fact that this word occurs in conjunction with 'design' (a favourite word of Milton's to describe Satan's work, and one which we have seen in conjunction with 'bold' in Satan's 'bold design' of Book II) suggests intention on Marvell's part in echoing such clusters of words. And, later in Book V, there is another such cluster of echoes, when Raphael answers Adam's request for more knowledge about spirits in heaven:

[...] how shall I relate
To human sense th' invisible exploits
Or warring Spirits; how without remorse
The ruin of so many glorious once
And perfect while they stood; how last unfold
The secrets of another world, perhaps
Not lawful to reveal?
(Book V, lines 564–570)

Again, 'ruin' is used to describe the fall of Satan and his cohorts, and the word 'unfold' occurs in a sense much closer to Marvell's own usage than the previous example of hell 'unfolding': as in the opening lines of Marvell's poem, there is worry about the propriety or lawfulness of 'unfolding' a story about sacred matters to a human listener. To read the first couplet of 'On *Paradise Lost*' with this detail in mind would be to activate possible negative connotations in the word 'unfold' not available without close attention to *Paradise Lost* itself. And perhaps Book V was one to which Marvell paid particularly close attention (and given that it enacts a narrative within a narrative which in some ways parallels *Paradise Lost* itself, this is not entirely surprising), because there is yet another double resonance with Marvell's poem near the end of that book, when Raphael describes God's derision for Satan's 'vain designs' (line 737). This provides another piece of evidence that Marvell was

deliberately echoing words which appear together in *Paradise Lost*: in line 16 of his poem he suggests that Milton might 'render vain' the sacred truths about which he writes.

Ruinous Vengeance

There are many more examples of the use of 'bold' and 'design' to describe Satan. In fact, reading Marvell's opening lines in relation to *Paradise Lost* itself we might conclude that Marvell is enforcing his criticisms of Milton and his project by using powerful resonances within Milton's own poem. And as Marvell's poem goes on the picture does not immediately become more positive. In fact, the first section of the poem taken as a whole both explicitly expresses doubts about Milton's project and resonates with Milton's poem in ways which enforce those doubts:

When I beheld the Poet blind, yet bold,
In slender Book his vast Design unfold,
Messiah Crown'd, *Gods* Reconcil'd Decree,
Rebelling *Angels*, the Forbidden Tree,
Heav'n, Hell, Earth, Chaos, All; the Argument
Held me a while misdoubting his Intent,
That he would ruine (for I saw him strong)
The sacred Truths to Fable and old Song,
(So *Sampson* groap'd the Temples posts in spight)
The World o'whelm'g to revenge his Sight.
(lines 1–10)

As we have seen, the first two lines, whilst not expressing anything unarguably negative, resonate with *Paradise Lost* itself to suggest a possibly anxious reading of the poem. The lines which follow make explicit these reservations, and suggest that Marvell 'misdoubts' Milton's intentions, in particular arguing that he could 'ruin' those sacred truths which he purports to explain and glorify. Moreover, the comparison to Samson is instructive, as it suggests that Milton is not only going to destroy the sacred truths but that he is also going to destroy *himself*: when Samson pulled down the temple he killed himself as well as the Philistines.³⁸ This vision of writing being self-defeating is, as we have seen, one which was perennially interesting, and even attractive, to Marvell. To suggest that the blind Milton writing

³⁸ See Judges 16 for the death of Samson.

Paradise Lost is like Samson being ‘avenged [...] for my two eyes’³⁹—that he is *deliberately* ruining the sacred truths to pay God back for his own blindness—is sharp criticism indeed, as it suggests both vengeful intention on Milton’s part and, also that his project will be self-defeating.

Moreover, ‘ruin’ in *Paradise Lost* is, as one might expect, almost exclusively linked to Satan and his followers. For example, in Book V Raphael describes ‘the ruin of so many glorious once’ (line 567) and this use of the word, to describe the ‘ruin’ of the bad angels led by Satan after their rebellion against God, is a very common one in the poem. It is also particularly resonant with the way in which Marvell uses the word to describe the change from something sacred to something wicked; ‘ruine [...] the sacred Truths’. Just as Satan ruins himself and the apostate angels through his rebellion and vengeance against God, Milton ruins ‘the sacred Truths’ in an act of wilful revenge for his own blindness.⁴⁰

If Marvell views *Paradise Lost* as an act of revenge by Milton, what kind of view of revenge does that poem itself give us? Certainly, the image of vengeance rebounding on itself is a frequent one in *Paradise Lost*: Satan is often described as a revenger and there is the constant prediction that his vengeful ‘designs’ will ultimately harm himself more than God.⁴¹ For example, in Book VI Satan rebuts Abdiel’s arguments against him, by describing the ‘wished hour | Of my revenge’ (lines 150–151).⁴² Abdiel argues, against this, that Satan’s plan will fail and predicts that he will end reigning only ‘in hell thy kingdom’ (line 183). Later in Book VI, in Raphael’s narrative to Adam, the idea that Satan’s revenge will be fruitless is made more explicit, as the angel indicates to Adam the result of siding with Satan:

³⁹ Judges 16. 30.

⁴⁰ This is not the only reading of Samson’s action possible, but seems to be the one at which Marvell drives, given his use of ‘revenge’ and ‘ruine’.

⁴¹ In *Revenge Tragedy: Aeschylus to Armageddon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) John Kerrigan notes that in *Paradise Lost* Milton makes a distinction between ‘a punitive resistance to wrong’ which is ascribed to God and the ‘irate revenging Satan’ (p. 121). He goes on to document the fact that Milton ‘edged his version of the Christian story into troubling relations with revenge tragedy’ (p. 121), suggesting the difficulties created by having even a carefully controlled association between God and revenge. The fact that these were difficulties with which Milton already struggled in *Paradise Lost* underlines the audacity of Marvell’s description of Milton himself being involved in ‘revenge’.

⁴² It is interesting to note that this section of *Paradise Lost* is one which Marvell echoes very frequently in his poem. Within sixty-two lines (lines 90–151), the words ‘vain’ (twice), ‘boldest’ and ‘revenge’ occur. Also, the word ‘whelmed’ (line 141) is used to describe the action of God in imprisoning Satan’s crew in hell, which Marvell possibly echoes in his description of Milton, like Samson, ‘the World o’rwhelming’. Again, it is these kinds of clusters of words which Marvell seems

[...] thou may'st partake
His punishment, eternal misery;
Which would be all his solace and revenge.
(lines 903–905)

This appears to work in the same way that Marvell's Samson analogy does: it suggests that to be vengeful is ultimately self-defeating. Slightly differently, in Book IX, Satan suggests that God wished 'to be avenged' (line 143) on him and so threw him down to hell. However, the fact that after this Satan meditates on the idea of revenge at some length suggests that Milton is implying not that God is in fact 'vengeful' but that Satan can only see actions in those terms. In the lines immediately following, Satan makes explicit his own vengeful nature:

But what will not ambition and revenge
Descend to? Who aspires must down as low
As high he soared, obnoxious first or last
To basest things. Revenge, at first though sweet,
Bitter ere long back on itself recoils;
Let it; I reck not, so it light well aimed
[...] spite then with spite is best repaid.
(lines 168–173, 178)

In this way Milton makes revenge something which Satan consciously attempts, and something to which he aspires. Yet it is precisely this vengeful impulse which drives the pleasurable narrative of *Paradise Lost* on: as in a revenge tragedy, despite the fact that we are supposed (in a Christian world) to disapprove of revenge, it is this very thing which shapes the work of art which we are enjoying. And it is thoroughly Satanic thinking, in the world of *Paradise Lost*, to think that *despite* its futility, one must invest in the power of revenge. By casting Milton as a futile revenger, then, Marvell aligns him with both the futility and great power of Satan's vengeful plot. Marvell makes Milton of the devil's party, with all the contradictions between power and futility, glory and ruin, and between human narrative understanding and timeless divine knowledge, which this implies.

to pick up, and which lend weight to the possibility that he *consciously* echoed parts of *Paradise Lost* in his poem to give particular effects and meanings.

[...]misdoubting his Intent,
That he would ruine (for I saw him strong)
The sacred Truths to Fable and old Song.
(lines 6–8)

This section of the poem is concerned about the ‘Fable and old Song’ which Marvell fears Milton is, ruinously, creating in place of the ‘sacred Truths’. This is, ostensibly, a very legitimate worry about *Paradise Lost*, given that the poem is in the paradoxical position of relying heavily on classical allusion (or ‘old Song’) to depict a Christian world in which the classical gods are seen as an idolatrous fall away from a ‘true’ belief. This could be the most damning of all Marvell’s criticisms of the poem, given that *Paradise Lost* attempts to use ‘old fables’ to make sacred truths understandable; the fables themselves should be subordinate to these higher truths. If, as Marvell suggests, the truths themselves are subordinated—or even ‘ruined’—by these ‘fables’, then Milton has altogether failed, as he puts it, to ‘justify the ways of God to men’ (Book I, line 26). Instead, he has crudely written man’s self-regarding fables over God’s truths.

Again, however, this criticism is more rich and complex if we look at the ways in which Milton himself uses the words within *Paradise Lost*. The word ‘fable’ is first used by Milton early in Book I to describe Satan who is ‘in bulk as huge | As whom the fables name of monstrous size’ (lines 196–197), and so the word gains resonances within Milton’s poem which point towards Satan.⁴³ In Book II, the connotations of ‘fable’ as wicked are perhaps even more strongly enforced. There, the ‘dark and dreary vale’ of hell is described as ‘worse | Than fables yet have feigned’ (lines 626–627).⁴⁴

In Book X, a particularly outrageous ‘fable’ is described:

However some tradition they dispersed
Among the heathen of their purchase got,
And fabled how the serpent, whom they called
Ophion with Eurynome, the wide-
Encroaching Eve perhaps, had first the rule

⁴³ See also later in Book I, when the vast size of the ranks of fallen angels is compared favourably with ‘what resounds | In fable or romance’ (lines 579–580).

⁴⁴ In another example of the cluster echoing which I discuss above, three lines after this use of ‘fable’, Satan is described as having ‘thoughts inflamed of highest design’ (line 630), which Marvell echoes in line 2 of his poem.

Of high Olympus.
(lines 578–583)

Here fables are strictly for the heathen and are ‘dispersed’ by the fallen angels, and so again the word takes on pejorative freight. Nevertheless, this is not as potentially damaging an association for the word as is suggested by a passage late in Book I:

[...] and how he fell
From heav’n, they fabled, thrown by angry Jove
Sheer o’er the crystal battlements: from morn
To noon he fell, from noon to dewy eve,
A summer’s day; and with the setting sun
Dropped from the zenith like a falling star,
On Lemmos th’ Aégæan isle: thus they relate,
Erring; for he with this rebellious rout
Fell long before.
(lines 740–748)

In this case, fable is used to mean those incorrect (‘erring’) stories told by heathens about Satan. A powerful piece of poetry, in a fashion characteristic of Milton, is undercut by the final ‘erring’. This is an example of what Stanley Fish would describe as being ‘corrected by one of several authoritative voices’,⁴⁵ and interestingly, in relation to Marvell’s poem, the powerful myth about Satan that Milton sees as so pernicious is a ‘fable’. By describing *Paradise Lost* as a ‘fable’, does Marvell open up the possibility that it too might be another one of those damaging myths, akin to this one about Satan? In the opening of Book III, Milton is keen to distance his own work from what Marvell would describe as ‘Fable and old Song’ suggesting, rather, that he is ‘Smit with the love of sacred song’ (line 29). This is an apt moment to emphasise this point, given that the beginning of Book III shifts the focus of *Paradise Lost* away from Satan and hell towards the world of God and heaven. By worrying that *Paradise Lost* might itself be an ‘old Song’ or a ‘Fable’, is Marvell reading decidedly against the grain, or appropriating Milton’s voice for the devil’s party, contrary to Milton’s stated objective to sing ‘sacred song’? One might argue that Milton’s protestations on this front reveal that he himself was aware of these possible criticisms—and the potentially ‘Satanic’ nature of his own poetic

⁴⁵ Stanley Fish, *Surprised By Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost*, 2nd edn (London: Macmillan, 1997), p. x.

project—but what is interesting is the contrast between his own defence of himself against such charges and Marvell's foregrounding of such thoroughgoing doubts.

Poetic Success and Poetic Vanity

These questions are made, if anything, more acute, as Marvell goes on to intensify his doubts in the next section of his poem:

Yet as I read, soon growing less severe,
I lik'd his Project, the success did fear;
Through that wide Field how he his way should find
O're which lame Faith leads Understanding blind;
Lest he perplex the things he would explain,
And what was easie he should render vain.
(lines 11–16)

This holds out a possible negation of previous criticism: Marvell is 'growing less severe', and posits the notion that, after all, Milton's poem is going to be a success.⁴⁶ Even as this is stated, though, further reservations are entered, as Marvell claims to be wary of the very brilliance which he describes. Lines 13–16 are complex and difficult to gloss but, I take it, this section is concerned with the complicated question of how—even if this is successful—one is to go about explaining God's will. How can a poet, Marvell asks, justify the ways of God to men? How can he, in human language, explain the ineffable truths which are a matter purely of faith? Marvell's criticism of Milton here chimes with a much more clear-cut attack Marvell made in *Mr. Smirke*. There Marvell chides his opponent for failing to realise that:

no language can reach the nature of procession or mission, nor to represent to humane understanding how they can both be the same, or wherein they may differ.⁴⁷

His opponent here errs because he fails to take account of the limits of human language, because he thinks that he *is* able to pronounce on such matters. Does Marvell accuse Milton of something similar, of making things which should be 'easy'—simple matters of faith which are beyond words—'vain' by attempting to put

⁴⁶ Some critics have taken 'success' to have a double meaning: as a *lack*, as well as a superabundance, of success: 'I feared Milton would not be successful'. Again, this kind of undecidability is common in Marvell, and is surely part of his meaning here.

⁴⁷ *Mr. Smirke: Or, the Divine in Mode*, Grosart IV, pp. 63–64.

them into self-serving language? Lame faith, Marvell suggests perhaps, is better than the claim, by the blind Milton, to 'understand'.

In this way Marvell seems to deem that Milton and his project might be *too* successful. *Paradise Lost*, he suggests, is a vain project; vain in the sense that it is self-aggrandising and reflects the poet's own vanity. In so far as Milton's poem is a success, it is one which works to glorify Milton himself, rather than the 'sacred truths' which Milton himself claims to be promoting. In this radical reading of the poem, like Satan at many points in *Paradise Lost*, Milton is figured as wishing to create something grand and impressive ostentatiously to demonstrate his own worth and power. Moreover, if we take the other meaning of the word 'vain'—as 'in vain'—then, as was the case earlier in Marvell's poem, he suggests that however grand and impressive this project might *seem*, it will ultimately be self-defeating, and this might chime with the earlier comparison between Milton and the self-defeating Samson. And 'Vain' is a word which Marvell uses elsewhere in this doubly damaging sense. In 'The Garden' the opening upbraiding of poets of action—who seek, 'vainly', to win 'the Palm, the Oke, or Bayes'—both senses of the word 'vain' are activated to suggest both futility *and* self-love. Later in that poem, as we have seen, the idyll and its maker crash to earth—'Stumbling on Melons, as I pass, | Insnar'd with Flow'rs, I fall on Grass' (lines 39–40)—as the negative energies of that vanity rebound on the creator of 'The Garden' itself. Thus the word becomes, for Marvell, particularly associated with poetic self-delusion and self-regard. In particular, it points towards a special kind of vanity—whereby 'vanity' prevents the recognition of the extent to which writing might be 'in vain'—which, as we have seen, Marvell explores and deplores throughout his career.

'Vain' seems to have had similar connotations for Milton himself, as it is another word which he uses repeatedly to describe Satan. Early in Book I, Satan is described as having 'Raised impious war in heav'n and battle proud | With vain attempt' (lines 43–44). Here, then, as well as being associated with 'pride', the word means 'in vain', particularly as it comes in the middle of a narrative of Satan's fall from heaven; it foreshadows his 'ruin' (line 46)—another Marvellian word. 'Vanity', in an inexorable logic suggested in part by the word itself, leads to ruin; to be vain, it would seem, is always to be 'in vain'. In the opening lines of Book II, both of these

possible meanings are deployed when Satan is described as: ‘insatiate to pursue | Vain war with Heav’n’ (lines 8–9). Again, ‘vain’ war serves the vanity of its perpetrator, and will always be ‘in vain’.

In Book III Milton himself engages in an extended meditation on the subject of vanity. On his epic voyage, Satan passes through the region of ‘all things transitory and vain’ (line 446):

[...] when sin
With vanity had filled the works of men:
Both all things vain, and all who in vain things
Built their fond hopes of glory or lasting fame,
Or happiness in this or th’ other life;
All who have their reward on earth, the fruits
Of painful superstition and blind zeal,
Naught seeking but the praise of men, here find
Fit retribution, empty as their deeds;
All th’ unaccomplished works of nature’s hand,
Abortive, monstrous, or unkindly mixed,
Dissolved on earth, fleet hither, and in vain,
Till final dissolution, wander here.
(lines 446–458)

In the phrase ‘fond hopes of glory, or lasting fame’ Milton echoes a sentiment familiar in the seventeenth century whereby writing in particular is seen as something which can last forever and ensure an individual’s lasting fame. This kind of endeavour—whether writing or anything else—is seen by Milton as erroneous because it invests in ‘the praise of men’ rather than that of God. This passage also acts as an exploration of the word ‘vain’ similar to that which Marvell undertakes in ‘The Garden’, and this carefully structured piece of writing mirrors the fall from ‘vain’ to ‘in vain’ in the reader’s experience. Milton initially explores vanity in the former sense, and then switches to the latter sense with ‘in vain [...] wander here’. So for Marvell to suspect that *Paradise Lost* is a ‘vain’ project—and that Milton is, by extension one of those who ‘in vain things | Built their fond hopes’—is especially problematic and unsettling. Again, Marvell focuses on an idea from which Milton has taken pains to distance himself, and argues that, in *Paradise Lost*, Milton flirts with ‘vanity’, despite his protestations to the contrary.

5. Marvell on Milton

Does Marvell raise these doubts in anticipation of criticism of Milton only, finally, to contain them by the end of his poem? What kind of overall reading of *Paradise Lost* does 'On *Paradise Lost*', then, represent? At first sight, perhaps, these seem to be unanswerable questions—or at least the *wrong* questions—given that Marvell's poem appears to point in opposite directions: one profoundly opposed to Milton's project, the other strongly in favour. It represents, we might say, an inconclusive reading, or one which cannot easily be summed up in a complete statement: we must always remain uneasy, admiring Milton whilst 'misdoubting' his great work. At least one reader of Marvell's poem, however, thinks that they have found an answer to this problem:

Marvell makes himself undergo that process of uncertainty, error, correction of vision, and affirmation that is Milton's strategy in the poem. Indeed, Marvell could be said to have anticipated the contemporary critical emphasis on the reader's role in reconstructing the text by making his judgements a function of his participation within the poem.⁴⁸

This 'contemporary critical emphasis' was initiated by Stanley Fish's *Surprised by Sin*, the purpose of which was, as Fish himself puts it, to break out of the 'impasse created by two interpretive traditions'.⁴⁹ These 'two traditions' represented on the one hand those for whom *Paradise Lost* was about the error of disobeying God, and, on the other, those who believed that Milton in fact glorifies such disobedience. Fish's famous solution—which has been touched on earlier—was to argue that both were correct and that:

Paradise Lost is a poem about how its readers came to be the way they are; its method [...] is to provoke in its readers wayward, fallen responses which are then corrected by one of several authoritative voices. (p. x)

In this way Fish posits that both 'camps' are only wrong in so far as they ignore the force of the other side's argument. So the 'Satanists' err in failing to notice that Milton is always diligent in correcting their pleasurable responses to Satan; the anti-Satanists overlook the fact that we as readers are supposed to find pleasure in Satan's dynamic language and action.

⁴⁸ Judith Scherer Herz, 'Milton and Marvell: The Poet as Fit Reader' in *Modern Language Quarterly* 39 (1978), pp. 239–263, p. 244. Herz, I think, refers in particular to Stanley Fish's influential reading of *Paradise Lost* in *Surprised By Sin*.

⁴⁹ Fish, *Surprised by Sin*, p. ix.

Does Marvell's poem offer, as Herz implies, a 'Fishian' reading of *Paradise Lost*, in which Marvell responds as Milton designed—first, anxiously, to the power of Satan's poetry, and then to the correction of this error? Does it, in other words, both pre-empt and reconcile the two divergent traditions of *Paradise Lost* criticism? Certainly, my reading of the poem might be used to support this case as it posits a movement in Marvell's poem from profound doubt to admiration and approval. However, there remains the issue of the extent to which the kinds of doubts which Marvell raises in the opening of his poem can ever be fully contained. Marvell's worries about *Paradise Lost* might almost be said to write themselves into the fabric of Milton's epic, and are therefore not easily undone or unwritten. Also, despite the eulogistic section of 'On *Paradise Lost*' (lines 23–44), worries about the way the poem ends remain: Marvell's remarkably self-castigating remarks about rhyme which conclude the poem do not at any rate amount to the kind of clearly correcting conclusion which Fish notes in *Paradise Lost*.

Both of these things, then, complicate Herz's assertion that Marvell's poem is a clear anticipation of reader-response approaches to *Paradise Lost*. They also raise some more fundamental questions about the kind of writer, and reader, Marvell was. For Stanley Fish, Milton is a dialectician; a writer of what he describes elsewhere as 'self-consuming artifacts'. Such a piece of writing consumes both its reader—whose outlook is fundamentally altered by the experience—and itself, as it is rendered unnecessary by the radical shift in thinking it effects.⁵⁰ We might, then, ask two related questions about Marvell's response to Milton: does Marvell's poem depict a dialectic Milton, and does it, itself, represent a dialectic endeavour? Is 'On *Paradise Lost*' itself a 'self-consuming artifact' which, having taught us how to read *Paradise Lost*, undoes itself?

I would argue that Marvell is not in fact a 'Fishian' reader of *Paradise Lost* because he lacks—as we have seen throughout this thesis—the dialectic confidence which Fish ascribes to Milton. Marvell's response to Milton is more tentative, less didactic and, finally, harder to assess 'overall' than such a reading would suggest.⁵¹

⁵⁰ See Stanley Fish, *Self Consuming Artifacts: The Experience of Seventeenth Century Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972).

⁵¹ This critique of a Fishian response echoes some of the debates within Milton criticism over Fish's possible oversimplification of *Paradise Lost*. See Fish's own assessment of these criticisms in the 'Preface to the Second Edition' of *Surprised By Sin*, pp. ix–lxix.

‘Self consuming artifacts’ are, despite their title, confident and assured pieces of writing, but Marvell’s writings are not so certain about their own status. The problem with a Fishian reading of Marvell would be the assumption that Marvell’s attack on his own poem came from a belief in its previous efficacy—that he could write it out of existence in the confidence that it had already done its work. As we have seen, it is precisely a *lack* of confidence in the clear effectiveness of his own writing with which Marvell struggled throughout his career.

To return to the opening section of this chapter, and the issue of rhyme, it is interesting to note again that Milton is the kind of writer who defends his own decisions to write and publish: like Spenser and Jonson before him, he writes prefaces and introductions to his works which seek to draw the reader in and, in the process, exonerate himself and his writerly decisions. Marvell rarely, if ever, wrote anything like a preface; in fact it is significant that Marvell is a writer who, far from defending himself and his own decisions to publish, frequently, as we have repeatedly seen, attacks himself, either explicitly or implicitly. His final poem is a fitting end to a career as a writer which was constantly at odds with itself: at the end of a career which was rich in self-reflexive, self-castigating writing, Marvell produced a masterpiece of anti-writing inspired by Milton which, at the same time, confirmed his own status, alongside Milton, as one of the most impressive writers of the seventeenth century. Unlike Milton, though, we might admire Marvell not for his writerly confidence and political commitment—a confidence which allowed Milton to write work of an awesome scale unthinkable for Marvell—but for the extraordinary qualities that hesitancy and care produced in his writing. Marvell is most impressive, in other words, in his constantly watchful and difficult relationship to his own writing. If ‘*On Paradise Lost*’ provides a fitting end to such a poetic career, then the poem examined in the concluding chapter, ‘An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell’s Return From Ireland’, is that career’s most defining and complex achievement.

Chapter 6

Marvell's 'Horatian Ode' and the Act of Writing

1. 'An Horatian Ode'—the Centre of the Marvell Canon

Most critics agree that 'An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return From Ireland'—written in the summer of 1650, just before Oliver Cromwell embarked on an aggressive military campaign in Scotland—is one of Marvell's most impressive and important poems, perhaps his greatest single achievement. There has been less agreement on the nature of that achievement. J.B. Leishman sums up the traditional view when he states that, 'I call it extraordinary because of its complete detachment and uncommittedness',¹ going on to describe Marvell's admiration for Cromwell as 'quite disinterested, and, as it were, aesthetic' (p. 14). The Ode was, then, viewed as a remarkable work because it managed to mediate an extraordinary and terrifying historical moment without political bias.²

It is not this approach, however, which set the tone for the Ode's critical reception for the latter half of the twentieth century, but a famous, even notorious, debate between two American scholars: in the late 1940s and early 1950s Cleanth Brooks and Douglas Bush argued out the relative merits of historicism versus close reading using Marvell's Ode as their case-study.³ Brooks, arguing passionately against what he saw as a widespread misconception that 'a poem is essentially a

¹ J.B. Leishman, *The Art of Marvell's Poetry*, p. 13.

² Similar views to this include T.S. Eliot, who declared that 'Jonson never wrote anything so pure as Marvell's *Horatian Ode*', going on to describe 'an equipoise, a balance and proportion of tones' in the poem, 'Andrew Marvell', pp. 74–75; Earl Miner, who writes that 'What above all the poem reveals in such hesitations and proposals is so fine a mingling of qualified satire and song that the total harmony prevents separation into constituent notes', *The Metaphysical Mode: From Donne to Cowley* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 210; Maren-Sofie Røstvig who spoke, in 1970, of the 'ambiguity in Marvell's attitude towards Charles and Cromwell', 'Surprise and Paradox: Perspectives on Marvell's Life and Poetry' in Arthur Pollard (ed.), *Andrew Marvell: A Casebook* (London: Macmillan, 1980), pp. 59–85, p. 70; and also, perhaps surprisingly, Hirst and Zwicker, who state in their article 'Andrew Marvell and the Toils of Patriarchy: Fatherhood, Longing, and the Body Politic' in *English Literary History* 66 (1999), pp. 629–654, that the Ode is 'remarkably serene' (p. 640), going on to ask: 'How could this febrile sensibility manage such poise in such a climacteric?' (p. 640). Their answer is curiously direct and biographical: 'the simultaneous absence of a patriarch and patron' (p. 641); and they go on to locate, interestingly but, to my mind, slightly unconvincingly, Marvell's entire output in the context of the 'politics of fathers and sons' (p. 650).

³ Brooks initially published his essay 'Marvell's "Horatian Ode"' in *English Institute Essays*, 1946, pp. 127–158, and the debate continued in the *Sewanee Review* with Bush's reply, also titled 'Marvell's "Horatian Ode"', appearing there in 1952 as did, in 1953, Brooks's further 'Note on the Limits of "History" and the Limits of "Criticism"'. For convenience, I cite all three of these essays from William R. Keast (ed.), *Seventeenth Century English Poetry: Modern Essays in Criticism*, where they are reprinted in full, pp. 321–358.

decorated and beautiful piece of prose' (p. 321), asserted that the 'problem' of 'An Horatian Ode' (which he saw as being its attitude to Cromwell) 'addresses itself properly to the critic. The historical scholars have not answered it' (p. 325). Modest in his claims, Brooks was not 'so presumptuous as to promise a solution to the problem' (p. 325) and instead offered 'suggestions—as to what the "Ode" may be saying', proceeding 'with explorations of further problems' (p. 325). Brooks's conclusion, having essayed a close reading of the Ode, was that the portrait of Cromwell 'is as heavily freighted with admiration as it is with a great condemnation' (p. 337). He then reflected on the relation of his case-study to the more general issue of literary criticism and its use of history:

I have argued that the critic needs the help of the historian—all the help he can get—but I have insisted that the poem has to be read as a poem—that what it "says" is a question for the critic to answer, and that no amount of historical evidence as such can finally determine what the poem says. (p. 339)

Douglas Bush, responded to this by arguing that:

far from making a disinterested inquiry into the evidence provided by the poem, he [Brooks] is forcing the evidence to fit an unspoken assumption—namely, that a sensitive, penetrating, and well-balanced mind like Marvell's could not really have admired a crude, single-minded, and ruthless man of action like Cromwell. (p. 342)

Bush concluded, on the contrary, that 'Mr Brooks is consistent in always loading the dice against Cromwell' (p. 343). Bush's own reading is distinctly pro-Cromwellian, and he dismisses Brooks's claims for irony and shifts of tone in Marvell's poem with some disdain. Bush's final charge is that Brooks constantly 'finds a greater degree of complexity than the text warrants' (p. 351), and himself argues for common-sense, 'natural' readings of the Ode. Brooks, in his own counter response to Bush begins, interestingly, by registering his 'complete agreement' (p. 352) with Bush's main proposition, going on to 'assure him that I find in the "Ode" genuine admiration of Cromwell' (p. 353). He ultimately suspects Bush of 'stalking bigger game' (p. 353), that of vindicating the historian against the critic, and goes on, interestingly (and legitimately), to argue that it was not his purpose to lionise the critic over the historian, but to indicate his 'concern for history and its claims' and to suggest that 'the literary historian and the critic need to work together' and, even more radically, to be the same person (p. 355). One interesting aspect of this debate is the extent to

which Bush's position pre-empts arguments made recently by exponents of what I have called the contextual revolution. For Bush, as for more recent contextual critics, political commitment is crucial, and the New Critic's desire to read poetry closely, seeking out its complexities and ambiguities serves, ultimately, to depoliticise it.⁴

Brooks and Bush, however, for all their stated differences, seem to share the view that the primary purpose of the Ode is to make a choice between Charles and Cromwell. They differ (although perhaps less than Bush in particular would like to think) in their method of criticism, and yet they both agree on what the subject matter of the poem is—what Marvell thinks of Cromwell—and on how one goes about debating this issue. Strikingly, this basic assumption about how to read the Ode, shared by Brooks and Bush, remains virtually unchallenged to this day. Most recent critics have addressed the extent to which the Ode is politically committed, and assessed that commitment by analysing Marvell's attitude to Cromwell. Donald Friedman, for example, states that 'the poem is what it most pretends to be—a celebration of Cromwell's accession to power, and a profoundly serious justification of that power'.⁵ At all times, as Bush did twenty years before him, Friedman argues that the Ode makes it 'perfectly clear' (p. 258) that it fully supports Cromwell, and he states that 'there is neither confusion or negligence in Marvell's method' (p. 258), and that we should read the poem's lines 'as they ask to be read' (p. 258). Also like Bush, Friedman does not seem to detect a question-begging circularity in arguing that we should read a poem on the authority of something which the critic himself has already decided upon (how it asks to be read, or what it 'pretends to be'), and Friedman persists in confident assertions about the 'purpose of the poem' (p. 266) and its 'underlying' (p. 264) meanings. There are, however, some gaps in Friedman's account. For example, he assumes a clear 'purpose' and readership for Marvell's poem without asking basic questions about who that readership is. He also addresses

⁴ That Bush was making this case in the early 1950s backs up the argument made in Chapter 1 above that the 'contextual revolution' is less new than its proponents would sometimes like to think. If Bush was making this case so strongly half a century ago, then it makes even more questionable the standard—'until recently'—rhetorical move of political critics. We might also ask—given the power of Brooks's own arguments against Bush—why there is currently so little in the way of a Brooksonian 'answer' to claims by proponents of the contextual revolution, though there are some signs of a new formalism emerging, a good example of which would be Peter McDonald's *Serious Poetry*.

⁵ Friedman, *Marvell's Pastoral Art*, p. 254.

at length the issue of classical precedents for the Ode, but fails to mention the crucial (and complicating) presence of Tom May's Lucan.

Michael Wilding too, although initially admitting that the Ode presents the reader with two possibilities to choose between—Charles and Cromwell—concludes that 'since Charles is now dead, the alternatives collapse into the single possibility of Cromwell'. Wilding immediately assures us that 'This, without doubt, is the intended effect',⁶ and this is typical of Wilding's language of absolute certainty. For Wilding, any reading of the Ode which admits of 'doubt'—on the part of Marvell himself, or the part of his modern reader—has inevitably 'been the expression of a deeply reactionary politics, an ideology of the apolitical to attempt the suppression of a politically radical literary tradition' (p. 2).⁷ And yet we might assert, on the contrary, that our own doubt about the politics of this historical moment, and an assumption that Marvell himself must have felt some kind of doubt about events, should be something which all critics might admit before tackling the poem itself.⁸ As I hope to show in the present chapter, doubt about politics—and doubt about how to write about it—far from being anachronistic or politically pernicious, is something which the Ode actually makes its subject.

Wilding himself, though, has not changed tack since the publication of *Dragons Teeth* in 1987. In a more recent piece, written in collaboration with Lyndy Abraham, his pro-Cromwellian argument is tacked (slightly uncomfortably) onto the issue of alchemical references in the Ode, and the Ode is seen as clearly 'justifying a revolutionary moment that heralds its break with the past'.⁹ Again, there is no room for question in these critics' minds (or, apparently, in Marvell's), and Wilding and Abraham seem sure that the Ode is involved in 'justifying' Cromwell's political

⁶ Michael Wilding, *Dragons Teeth*, p. 120.

⁷ For recent dissenting voices, see Thomas M. Greene, 'The Balance of Power in Marvell's "Horatian Ode"', in Robert Demaria Jr (ed.), *British Literature 1640–1789: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), pp. 69–85, who states that his essay 'will assume Marvell's own bafflement by that particular historical text the ode attempts to read' (p. 69); and Paul Hammond (see below).

⁸ We have already seen, in Chapter 3, the extent to which the Civil War was a cause of general uncertainty and also, in Chapter 4, how the war caused Royalists much confusion and doubt.

⁹ Michael Wilding and Lyndy Abraham, 'The Alchemical Republic: A Reading of "An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland"' in Warren Chernaik and Martin Dzelzainis (eds), *Marvell and Liberty*, pp. 94–122, p. 110. There is a significant and apparently unnoticed contradiction in this essay, which asserts that Cromwell's positive association with alchemy makes him, for Marvell, the man of the future. But the article begins by arguing for a strong alchemical reference in the 'great work' in line 34 of the Ode (p. 96). The 'great work', though, precedes Cromwell and is, in fact, associated with

aims. Stephen Greenblatt's view, as we have already seen, is similarly uncomplicated: for this critic Marvell's Ode merely provides a particularly 'obvious' example of the working of the system of cultural constraints by which societies function, in this case to 'celebrate civic or military virtues as embodied by certain admired individuals' (i.e. Cromwell).¹⁰ Annabel Patterson highlights the section of the Ode which concerns Cromwell's future foreign policy and concludes that Marvell asserts 'the authority of a mission that in its modernity and reforming zeal rests securely on classical precedent',¹¹ and Howard Erskine-Hill describes the Ode as 'wholly Cromwellian'.¹²

The most important recent accounts of 'An Horatian Ode' are, however, those by David Norbrook, whose latest word on the subject comes in his *Writing the English Republic* (1999).¹³ Norbrook's argument, that the Ode marks the moment at which Marvell finally and decisively entered the forum of national debate on the Republican side is powerful and politically admirable, and is rightly one of the benchmarks for critics of Marvell, and for the period more generally. His wider argument—that mid-seventeenth century Republican discourse has undergone a process of erasure at the hands of literary historians with an unspoken pro-Royalist bias—is persuasive and important, and it is understandable that Marvell should be a central part of this project to recover and celebrate Republicanism. Any reader familiar with the exciting radicalism of the debates in mid-seventeenth century politics might be inspired by Norbrook's re-animation of these frequently overlooked issues; the placement of 'An Horatian Ode' within this discourse is illuminating, and his reading brings out previously unimagined meanings in Marvell's poem. However, on close inspection, similar worries about Norbrook's account emerge to those that have been raised about the overly certain formulations of Bush, Patterson, Wilding and Friedman. Norbrook states, for example, that 'the 'Horatian Ode' can be read as

Charles. If Cromwell is not the only alchemist in the poem, then the whole political thrust of the essay is undermined.

¹⁰ Stephen Greenblatt, 'Culture' in Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (eds), *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, 2nd edn, p. 227.

¹¹ Patterson, 'Andrew Marvell and the Revolution', p. 116.

¹² Howard Erskine-Hill, *Poetry and the Realm of Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 161.

¹³ He published earlier accounts of the Ode in the shape of 'Marvell's "Horatian Ode" and the Politics of Genre' in Thomas Healy and Jonathan Sawday (eds), *Literature and the English Civil War*, pp. 147–169, and 'Is Marvell's "Horatian Ode" a Horatian Ode?' in William Lamont (ed.), *Religion, Renaissance and Civil War, Proceedings of the Folger Institute Center for the History of British Political Thought*, Vol. 3 (Washington DC, 1990), pp. 221–258.

a straightforward glorification of Cromwell's power' (p. 250) and then that 'Marvell had decided to become a 'forward Youth' (p. 250). This, as we shall see in more detail later, seems to be an over-confident identification between Marvell and the poet figure at the opening of the Ode. Norbrook also argues that the Ode was circulating in Republican circles, suggesting that 'Fisher, Milton, and others had seen the Ode' (p. 251). The point is well made, but Norbrook does not make mention of the evidence given by Cleanth Brooks that the Royalist Robert Wild had also seen the poem.¹⁴ If the Ode had both Royalist and Republican readers, then Norbrook's argument becomes rather less convincing.

A whole set of important recent critics—Patterson, Friedman, Wilding, Greenblatt, Norbrook and others—agree, then, with Douglas Bush and Cleanth Brooks that the Ode is 'about' Marvell's attitude to Cromwell. They all also agree that this attitude is one of fairly uncomplicated admiration. This is no great surprise; there is, after all, a lot at stake in reading 'An Horatian Ode', for if one of the greatest political poems in the language failed to show real political commitment, then the implications for a wider critical practice the central tenet of which is political commitment would be serious indeed. The extent to which specific examples of such readings of the Ode itself are misleading and sometimes misguided will emerge as this chapter unfolds. The main thrust of what follows, however, seeks to put the Ode in the context of the preceding chapters in this thesis, attempting to relocate the Ode at the centre of Marvell's own explorations of the act of writing. In agreement with the critical tradition that sees the Ode as Marvell's greatest poetic achievement, I argue that it proves particularly and compellingly Marvellian precisely because it makes writing in the face of unimaginable events not just its premise, but its subject. 'An Horatian Ode' is not just a political assertion, or even simply a commentary on politics. It is, rather, a complex exploration of the issue of political writing itself. Written in the face of, and about, events that were perhaps the most perplexing,

¹⁴ Brooks suggests that Robert Wild had read the Ode, citing echoes in his poem on the death of Christopher Love ('Marvell's "Horatian Ode"', pp. 331–332). Also suggestive is Paul Hammond's argument that Dryden had seen the poem, and he points to echoes of the Ode in both 'Absalom and Achitophel' and 'Annus Mirabilis' in 'Dryden's Use of Marvell's *Horatian Ode* in *Absalom and Achitophel*' in *Notes and Queries* 233 (1988), pp. 173–174; and James Loxley's arguments—in 'Marvell, Villiers, and Royalist Verse' in *Notes and Queries* 239 (1994), pp. 170–172, and in 'Prepar'd at Last to Strike in With the Tyde? Andrew Marvell and Royalist Verse' in *Seventeenth Century* 10 (1995), pp. 39–62—that the Ode, and other contemporaneous poems, demonstrate Marvell's 'immersion in the Royalist verse of the time' ('Prepar'd at Last', p. 40).

difficult to assimilate, and even baffling, that England had ever known, the Ode is the most searching critique of writing in Marvell's career.

2. 'The forward Youth that would appear': Poetry, the Classics, and Writing after the Civil War

If Marvell's writing relentlessly questions the act of writing, 'An Horatian Ode' engages similar issues through the figure of the 'forward Youth':

The forward Youth that would appear
Must now forsake his *Muses* dear,
Nor in the Shadows sing
His Numbers languishing.
'Tis time to leave the Books in dust,
And oyl th' unused Armours rust:
Removing from the Wall
The Corslet of the Hall.
So restless *Cromwel* could not cease
In the inglorious Arts of Peace
But through adventurous War
Urged his active Star.
(lines 1–12)

These lines offer a complex series of questions about writing, perhaps the most pressing of which is: who is this forward youth? David Norbrook, as we have seen, answers this question with assurance when he states that on writing the Ode 'Marvell had decided to become a "forward Youth"'.¹⁵ Marvell is, according to Norbrook, *himself* the forward youth of these opening lines, and later, Norbrook asserts that the 'poet of the poem's opening becomes suddenly yoked to Cromwell at the ninth line by a decisive "So" that lifts him out of traditional frameworks' (p. 267). For this critic, then, the forward youth is both Marvell himself (and like-minded others such as John Hall) and also Oliver Cromwell, the comparative 'So' working to force together the two figures. This is supported by the fact that, like the forward youth, Cromwell is himself later described as having lived in 'private Gardens [...] reserved and austere' (lines 29–30) before he embarked on the remarkable course of action depicted in the Ode. In Norbrook's view, Marvell urges himself and others to 'appear' and come forward to fight alongside Cromwell, who—having achieved

¹⁵ *Writing the English Republic*, p. 250.

undreamt of success against the Irish—was about to embark on a campaign against Scotland, a campaign which is eagerly anticipated in the Ode itself. The youth, in this reading, is both being likened to Cromwell—in that he faces a similar dilemma to that which Cromwell faced before the Civil War—and is also being urged to do now what Cromwell did a decade ago, and choose action rather than retirement.

This view, however, gains clarity at the expense of attention to detail, and a number of problems immediately present themselves. If the youth is a version of Marvell himself then it seems, if not absurd, then at least highly ironic that he is, by definition, writing a poem rather than taking up arms. If, on the other hand, the Ode was written with the affirmative purpose of urging *others* to fight, then it is curious that it was not published, and that evidence of its circulation in manuscript is so limited: it is quite possible, from the evidence that we have, that only a handful of people actually read the Ode near the time it was written. Another problem is a biographical one. If Marvell was so keen to take up arms for Cromwell against the Scots, then why, immediately after writing the Ode, did he take up a tutorship to the daughter of Sir Thomas Fairfax? The former Parliamentary commander resigned rather than go to war in Scotland as it was a war which Fairfax considered to be one of naked aggression. If 'An Horatian Ode' is a clear call-to-arms for Cromwell against the Scots, then Marvell's subsequent taking up employment with Thomas Fairfax, and handsomely praising Fairfax and his political decisions in 'Upon Appleton House', seems a remarkable *volte-face*. The fact that Marvell wrote 'Tom May's Death'—a poem which as we have seen is searingly critical of May's 'defection' to the Parliamentary side—soon after 'An Horatian Ode', also suggests that Norbrook's explanation of the forward youth is too straightforward and confident; something more complex must be going on in the opening of this poem.

Moreover, problems with the kind of reading Norbrook gives are presented by the poetic structure of 'An Horatian Ode', which does not lend itself to the clear, forward-moving, argument which he, and others, see in the poem. The unusual technique of alternating tetrameter and trimeter couplets has the effect of repeated thinking and rethinking, as frequently the trimeter couplet revisits, reconsiders, or expands upon what is posited in the tetrameter. This kind of structure is more suited to an exploratory mode of writing than to blunt assertion, as grander, poised statements formulated in tetrameter, come under the scrutiny of the sometimes

reductive, brisk chattiness of the trimeter. The poetic structure is more fitting for the complex dilemma haunting the forward youth than depicting without equivocation Cromwell's lightning-like progress through Civil War politics. We might think here of Clearth Brooks's apt, if unfashionable, warning against seeing poetry only as 'a decorated and beautiful piece of prose'; to notice Marvell's poetic structure in the Ode is to suppose that this structure itself carries meaning, and this in turn questions the idea of unequivocal movement and assertion in the poem.

A more general solution which some critics have suggested to the questions that the opening lines of the Ode pose, is that Marvell was arguing for a new kind of writing—for a new forwardness in poetry. Rosalie Colie states that:

At the beginning, the poet tells us, he "must" write another kind of poetry, "must now forsake his *Muses* dear," the private, contemplative, lyric poetry thitherto his choice, for a more heroic style and subject.¹⁶

This solves some of the difficulties associated with imagining that Marvell proposes immediate military action, but raises, if anything, more serious problems. This analysis is, for Colie, uncharacteristically un-textual, as there is little suggestion in the opening lines of 'An Horatian Ode' that the forward youth is being urged to write a new kind of poetry. The dilemma (if it is such, given the imperative and possibly unpleasant 'must') is, instead, whether or not to take up arms. This is strongly argued by "'Tis time to leave the Books in dust, | And oyl th' unused Armours rust': it would seem that *all* the books are being left in dust, not just those pertaining to languishing 'numbers', and the alternative is the forward youth taking up his rusting armour to fight, or at least to defend himself. The rhyme dust/rust (and perhaps obliquely, 'must'), acts to force these concepts apart as the rhyme superficially brings them together, and enforces the idea of writing and fighting as mutually exclusive, arguing that one must inevitably decay for the other to prosper. If this is an apt reading it would seem that Marvell argues that the only way to be heroic is to take up arms, and not to write, whatever the 'style and subject' of that writing.

Even this, though, is to argue from too stable and secure a position, because the ambiguity of Marvell's language here undermines clear and unequivocal meaning. For either Colie's or Norbrook's reading to be felicitous, the meaning of

¹⁶ Rosalie Colie, *My Ecchoing Song*, pp. 67–68.

the opening lines has to stabilize to 'The young man who wants to come forward into public/political life needs to abandon his poetry and take up arms and fight (or write) for Cromwell, just as Cromwell abandoned his own retirement to take up arms against the King'. It is certainly true that there is a complex interdependence between our interpretation of the forward youth and Cromwell in the Ode; it is important to remember the crucial 'So' in line 9 of the poem when assessing Marvell's narration of Cromwell's career, and therefore to relate these events back to the dilemma of the forward youth at the beginning of the poem. Yet there is much in this opening which is genuinely ambiguous, and which therefore undermines the simple gloss given above which is tacitly accepted by Norbrook and Colie. The first significant word of the poem 'forward' has, rightly, been the subject of some critical controversy. Cleanth Brooks argued that 'there lurks in the word a sense of "presumptuous", "pushing"'.¹⁷ Douglas Bush returned with the contention that the word 'should be taken in its common and natural sense', and accuses Brooks of 'grasp[ing] at a pejorative possibility'.¹⁸ Whether Brooks is himself 'grasping' or not, Bush's argument about 'common [...] natural sense' has not aged well: in these theoretically alert times we are unlikely to accept what might *seem* natural to be, as it were, the real thing. The word play in this and other poems by Marvell suggests a literary artist very much in control of the polyphony of meanings alive in the English language, and the various definitions of 'forward' in the *OED* do seem to point towards a duality between 'naturally' forward, and pejoratively grasping, pushy and precocious. So there is certainly a suggestion here that the forward youth is not being presented in such a way as to make his equation with Marvell himself entirely comfortable or convincing.

Another problem is the possible double meaning of the word 'appear'. The preceding argument has assumed that 'appear' means 'come forward', and yet it might also imply *appearing* as opposed to *being* forward, suggesting that the abandonment of the muses could partly be a matter for show, as much as a desire for action. The possibilities created by this meaning are deepened by the use of the word 'languishing' at the end of the fourth line. 'Languishing' is a dactylic word in tension with the underlying iambic meter of the Ode. The poem's meter pushes us to hear the

¹⁷ Cleanth Brooks, 'Marvell's "Horatian Ode"', p. 326.

¹⁸ Douglas Bush, 'Marvell's "Horatian Ode"', p. 342.

word with two stresses—on the opening and closing syllables—but the word itself languishes against this rising rhythm creating a weak ending to the line which mirrors the youth's apparently 'weak' love of his Muses.¹⁹ But if Marvell's Ode and the forward youth's poetry both languish, then for a moment the poet and his subject become perilously close. Given that Marvell himself is, by definition, writing a poem and not preparing his rusting armour to fight, then we might further question whether this opening is a call to arms or simply something which merely makes an *appearance* of action.

We might also pertinently ask *why* the youth's armour is rusting on the hall's wall? The year 1650 is not one typically associated with long retirement from action; on the contrary, England might well be described as battle-weary, and the implication that the forward youth has been sitting in his 'hall' writing poetry during the years of civil war, as his contemporaries gave their lives for a cause, is a slightly unsettling one. With this in mind we might also notice that the youth's passion is for his poetry and not for action: his muses are 'dear' (and, like the numbers, are assuredly *his*) and these are things which he is 'forsaking', by implication of the word itself, extremely unwillingly. This affection for his muses is enforced by the imperative of the poetic speaker's '*Must* now', as if the youth is by inclination unwilling to fight. Indeed, the equipment he considers taking up is, in fact, purely defensive armour, in contrast to Cromwell's aggressive sword described later in the poem.

The description of the youth languishing in the 'Shadows' raises more problems. Why not 'in the Garden sing', for example, which would resonate more strikingly with Cromwell's rise from his 'private Gardens' (line 29)? Although the description as it stands might make the youth sound less like Cromwell emerging from his gardens, it does find resonance late in the poem when Cromwell is urged to defend England against 'Spirits of the Shady night' (line 118). A.D. Nuttall chides the 'unlearned reader' for not realising that 'for one living under a fierce Mediterranean sun shadows connote not only obscurity but comfortable ease — the

¹⁹ See Norbrook: 'In the 'Ode', courtly elegance is associated with a certain evasion of difficult realities, as in the weak rhyme of 'sing' with 'languishing'', *Writing the English Republic*, pp. 266–267. In order to make this sensitive close reading fit his wider political narrative Norbrook tacitly asserts that the 'weak rhyme' is an imitation of the youth's voice, and that the affirmative command to 'appear' represents Marvell speaking in his own voice. This, to my mind, downplays the deeper complexities of these lines.

vita umbratilis ('life in the shade'),²⁰ but perhaps he himself is guilty of not noticing the shadows turn worryingly into 'Shady night' in the course of the Ode. We might argue, in fact, that the end of the poem points back to its beginning, and asks that we reconsider the youth's dilemma in its light or, perhaps more accurately, in its shadow. These are matters to which I shall return later in the chapter, but it is worth noticing, in 'Shadows', and in the possible connotations of illness in 'languishing'—as well as in the general decadence indicated by 'rust' and 'dust'—the feeling of all not being well, or a distinct sense of unease.²¹ David Norbrook accuses many critics of missing 'the sharply aggressive tone of so much of his [Marvell's] writing in verse as well as prose' (p. 244), which is a pertinent point, but perhaps some other critics (Norbrook and Nuttall, amongst others) have missed notes of unease in Marvell's writings, particularly those written around the end of the Civil War.²² As Thomas M. Greene puts it: 'The "Horatian Ode" is framed with shadows. It begins with an emergence from them [...] and it ends with Cromwell penetrating them, not without risk'.²³

It would seem, then, that the 'forward Youth' cannot easily be equated with a single figure, or even with a particular political party or course of action. What we have, in fact, is an opening of a poem about a writer, the 'forward Youth', which asks troubling but important questions about what a writer might do in the circumstances of Cromwell's assumption of supreme power, but offers no simple solutions. This is not entirely surprising, for this was a moment of intense and sometimes overwhelming doubt for many of Marvell's contemporaries and for Marvell himself. This uncertainty about the act of writing itself resonates with much of what we have seen of Marvell's career, and in particular other poems written close to this time. In

²⁰ A.D. Nuttall, 'Marvell and Horace' in Charles Martindale and David Hopkins (eds), *Horace Made New* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 86–102, p. 91. See A.J.N Wilson, 'On "An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland"', first published in 1969 reprinted in Arthur Pollard (ed.), *Andrew Marvell Poems: A Casebook* (London: Macmillan, 1980), pp. 176–198, especially pp. 178–179, for a discussion of the *vita umbratilis* which somewhat contradicts Nuttall's confident assertion here.

²¹ *OED* (1) states that *languish* means: 'To grow weak, faint, or feeble: to lose health [...] In early use often: to be sick'. Marvell himself used the word in a potentially pejorative context in 'Upon Appleton House', in which the narrator describes himself as 'languishing with ease' (line 593) as he descends into a dangerous passivity which concludes with his own confinement and violent penetration by nature (see especially lines 609–616.).

²² Norbrook's own account sensitively notes what he twice calls 'ominous' shades in the Ode (specifically in the poem's portrayal of Cromwell, (see *Writing the English Republic*, pp. 254, 263, and yet on both occasions he is quick to close off the argument.

²³ 'The Balance of Power in Marvell's "Horatian Ode"', p. 75.

their different ways, Marvell's poems to Witty, his tribute to Lovelace, his elegy to Hastings, his anti-elegy to Tom May, and his long poem to Fairfax all explore this territory of what writers can do in the difficult circumstances of the Civil War; all pose questions and raise acute difficulties rather than give confident answers and predictions. In this context, the Ode is far from being out of place or anomalous, but explores very similar issues under the intense pressure of circumstances: the problem of identifying the forward youth, and establishing what Marvell was advocating for him becomes, in this light, less of a critical—or a political—problem, and more of an issue with which Marvell himself was in a prolonged struggle.

The complexity of the forward youth himself is not the end of the story, because the opening of the Ode is also haunted by a series of other writers to whom Marvell alludes. How do these writers—Horace, Lucan and Tom May in particular—figure in the complex equation of this poem's beginning? The first allusion to note is, of course, that to Horace's Odes in the title of the poem. If the Ode is Horatian, then the initial expectation might be that Marvell is setting himself up as Horace to Cromwell's Augustus, and in that case the poem might be read as one which casts Cromwell as Octavian returning victorious from the civil wars, soon to be 'crowned' Augustus Caesar, and which therefore hails a new period of peaceful national politics and creativity. Just as that period of Roman history was to produce Horace, Virgil, and, more problematically, Ovid, Marvell perhaps hopes that the peace that Cromwell should bring will engender something similar in England. This possibility might be underlined by the fact that (additionally to its title) 'An Horatian Ode' draws on Horace's Odes, most notably 'Nunc est Bibendum', which, as a hymn to the pleasures of peace, makes similar sounding contrasts between the madness of times of war and the comforts of peace.²⁴

²⁴ See Margoliouth I, p. 297. The classic account of Marvell's Horatianism is John Coolidge's subtle article 'Marvell and Horace' in *Modern Philology* 63 (1965), pp. 111–120. Coolidge concludes, however, that Horace provides an entirely apt model for Marvell and that Marvell asserts in the Ode that 'it is the poet alone who can preserve the integrity of his civilisation through the time of social convulsion' (p. 120). This chapter will argue that Marvell's Ode in fact evinces a far less affirmative view of the writer's role than this. See also A.J.N. Wilson, 'On "An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland"', for what is ultimately a similarly positive view to that of Coolidge as to the working of the classics in the Ode, and Blair Worden, 'Andrew Marvell, Oliver Cromwell, and the Horatian Ode' in Kevin Sharpe and Stephen Zwicker (eds), *Politics of Discourse: The Literature and History of Seventeenth-Century England*, pp. 147–180, who affirms that 'Marvell would doubtless have been glad by the mid-1650s to hear his relationship with Cromwell compared to that of Horace with Augustus' (p. 151).

There is immediately a problem with this confident identification, because the opening lines of 'An Horatian Ode' reverse the chronology of a poem such as 'Nunc est Bibendum', to move not from war to peace, but from peace to war; Marvell's call is to arms, Horace's was to revelry. Moreover, the opening lines most obviously echo not Horace, but Lucan's *The Civil War*, and specifically Tom May's translation, and continuation, of that work. These echoes, then, take the reader back to a much earlier, and bloodier, period of Roman history, when a previous Caesar (Julius) was invading Italy to assume a worryingly total control of the empire.²⁵ They also pre-empt Marvell's hostile engagement with Tom May, whose translation of Lucan's description of the invading despot Caesar reads as follows:

But restlesse valour, and in warre a shame
 Not to be Conquerour; fierce, not curb'd at all,
 Ready to fight, where hope, or anger call,
 His forward Sword; confident of successe,
 And bold the favour of the gods to presse:
 Orethrowing all that his ambition stay,
 And loves that ruine should enforce his way;
 As lightning by the winde forc'd from a cloude
 Breakes through the wounded aire with thunder loud,
 Disturbs the Day, the people terrifies,
 And by a light oblique dazels our eyes,
 Not *Joves* owne Temple spares it; when no force,
 No barre can hinder his prevailing course,
 Great waste, as foorth it sallyes and retires,
 It makes and gathers his dispersed fires.²⁶

It is clear that this translation reverberates through Marvell's depiction of Cromwell in 'An Horatian Ode', for example the phrase 'restlesse valour' chimes with 'restless *Cromwel*' (line 9), and there are many other verbal echoes between the two portraits ('lightning', 'cloude', 'Breakes', 'aire', 'Temple' and so on). But what are we to make of these similarities? Lucan's description of the terrifying, almost supernatural, power of Julius Caesar was read by Marvell's contemporaries as a Republican assertion of Caesar's anti-democratic tendencies, and one recent classical scholar states that Lucan's Caesar was 'one of the most terrifying portrayals in all

²⁵ They also, perhaps, cast Marvell—rather than as a Horace to Cromwell's Augustus—as a Lucan to Cromwell's Nero, which is a far more troubling relationship: Lucan conspired unsuccessfully against Nero, and eventually committed suicide on Nero's orders. Coolidge aptly summarises the effect of the Ode's Lucanic resonances: 'Echoes from Lucan in the "Horatian Ode" provide a ground note of warning that the stakes in the wager are high. It is not so much Lucan's hatred of Caesar that should be a warning as it is the desperation permeating his poem on the Civil War', Marvell and Horace', p. 118.

²⁶ *The Civil War* Book 1, quoted by Margoliouth I, pp. 295–296.

literature of the totalitarian project', and describes him as 'the very type of the absolutist charismatic leader'.²⁷ Although Tom May was not, at the point at which he began translating Lucan, a Republican—in fact he was still staunchly Royalist—contemporaries thought that Lucan played a part in turning him into a hater of monarchy. As Aubrey put it: 'His translation of Lucan's excellent Poeme made him in love with the Republique, which Tang stuck by him'.²⁸ As we have seen, Marvell himself engages, in 'Tom May's Death', in a complex critique of May part of which hinges on criticisms of this kind. May's description of Caesar, like Marvell's portrait of Cromwell, although clearly impressive (and, perhaps, impressed) is laced with a Lucanic hostility to an individual of such destructive, potentially tyrannical, power. By echoing this description of Caesar in his portrait of Cromwell, Marvell might be seen as importing Lucanic, Republican, distaste for the tyrannical Caesar into his 'Horatian' Ode for Cromwell. Crucially, however, the way in which Republicanism informs Marvell's Ode at this point is surprising, as it would seem to be Cromwell, rather than Charles, who is the imagined enemy to the people's Republic.²⁹ In addition, the opening lines of the Ode may echo another passage from Book 1 of *The Civil War*, when Caesar invades Actium:

With this sad noise the Peoples rest was broke,
The young men rose, and from the temples tooke
Their Armes, now such as a long peace had marr'd,
And their old bucklers now of leather's barr'd:
Their blunted Pikes not of a long time us'd,
And Swords with th'eatings of blacke rust abus'd.³⁰

Again, this is reminiscent of the opening of the Ode, in which the youth of England are forced to take up their rusty arms. This enforces the idea of Cromwell as Caesar,

²⁷ Sarah Annes Brown, 'Introduction', in Sarah Annes Brown and Charles Martindale (eds), *Lucan: The Civil War* (London: Everyman, 1998), p. xxvii. She also makes it clear that she considers Lucan to signify Republicanism for Marvell when she states that in 'An Horatian Ode, 'two quite different configurations of the Roman revolution – one Horatian and Augustan, the other Lucanic and Republican – are recalled, both relevant to, but neither quite fitting, contemporary occurrences' (p. xxii).

²⁸ John Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, p. 269. Norbrook supports the idea that May's first Lucan translation was charged with Republicanism, see *Writing the English Republic*, pp. 43–62. For an alternative view, see Howard Erskine-Hill, *The Augustan Idea in English Literature*, pp. 183–189, who argues for the Royalism of May's Lucan. Such disagreements underline the genuine complexity of what Marvell was doing by invoking Lucan—and other classical writers—in the Ode.

²⁹ In *Writing the English Republic* Norbrook mentions this, admitting that 'possible parallels between Cromwell and Caesar do cast an ominous shadow' (p. 263) but, as with other such complexities, finally rejects 'paradoxes' in favour of things which 'make more sense' (p. 263).

³⁰ Tom May's translation, quoted by Margoliouth I, p. 297.

and in this case he becomes an invading tyrant who attacks his own country in a bid to gain absolute power. The 'forward Youth', to push this reading to its logical conclusion, is being urged to fight *against*, not with Cromwell. Michael Wilding pours scorn on J.M. Newton's 'ultimate Royalist interpretation' of the Ode, in which Newton asks whether or not the forward youth is being urged to join 'other young Royalist hot-heads in an attempt to catch and assassinate Cromwell in London',³¹ and yet these echoes of Lucan might be deployed to support the main contention of Newton's reading. Marvell, through close verbal echoing, turns Cromwell into a Caesar figure, and so puts the imperatives of the forward youth's turn to action in the context of an invading tyrant. The 'Must now', in this context, would appear not to be—as Norbrook and others have had it—a happily affirmative order from the poet to himself and like-minded others to fight *for* Cromwell,³² but an unfortunate and terrifying demand to fight *against* Cromwell; a demand which has been pressed upon the youth of the country by the apparently unstoppable strength of one of the country's military leaders.³³

However, the echoes of Lucan are not so straightforward as that, and it is not possible to rest on the reading of Cromwell as Caesar: the way in which Marvell draws on *The Civil War*—and on Tom May's *Continuation of The Civil War*—in the rest of his poem makes this unconvincing. For example, the lines on the death of Charles in the Ode draws on the death of Caesar, at the end of the Seventh Book of May's *Continuation*, in which Caesar's life is described as one 'assaulted by so many hands; | No succours could approach, no guard, nor bands | Of aiding friends were nigh' (lines 635–637).³⁴ Marvell echoes the rhyme in his lines on Charles's execution: 'While round the armed Bands | Did clap their bloody hands' (lines 55–56). This resonance drives home the point that we cannot simply equate Cromwell with Lucan's Caesar as, at this point of the poem, Charles, and not Cromwell is being viewed as Caesar-like. This also brings into play our interpretation of Lucan himself: May's *Continuation*, printed with a dedication to King Charles, sought to

³¹ Wilding, *Dragons Teeth*, p. 115. The J.M. Newton article he quotes is: 'What do we know about Andrew Marvell?' in *Cambridge Quarterly* 6 (1973), pp. 125–143, p. 129.

³² *Writing the English Republic*, pp. 256–257.

³³ The parallels between Cromwell and Julius Caesar are strong, as both were initially military leaders who later assumed huge political power.

³⁴ Tom May's translation, quoted from the Chadwyck-Healy Literature Online Database.

domesticate Lucan's *Civil War* and to ask his readers to think sympathetically about Caesar, who is portrayed as a ruler unfairly usurped.³⁵ So although the earlier identification of Cromwell with Caesar might be read as a critique of Cromwell, the identification between Charles's death and that of Caesar in Tom May's Lucanic continuation might suggest instead a defence of Charles-as-Caesar. To complicate things still further, Margoliouth also notes that Charles's death is, in addition, reminiscent of the dignified, uncomplaining death of Pompey, towards the end of the Eighth Book of *The Civil War*.³⁶ To push at this analogy suggests that Charles is the people's friend wrongfully killed by the aggressive, militarist Cromwell/Caesar. Marvell's allusions to Lucan, in other words, will not settle, and keep the reader thinking about the aptness, and perhaps the possibility of such classical models.³⁷ Indeed, the way in which fraught and contentions acts of interpretation—interpretations of Roman history, of Lucan, of Thomas May, of the Civil War, of Marvell's own writing—layer onto each other in bewilderingly complex ways in the Ode, suggests that this is a complex tangle that we, as readers, are meant to notice and reflect on, rather than see a clear way beyond.

The more explicit references to classical history continue to multiply alarmingly, and confusingly, as the Ode progresses. Charles I becomes Julius Caesar to Cromwell's democratic Brutus when '*Cæsars* head at last | Did through his Laurels blast' (lines 23–24). As Paul Hammond puts it: 'Caesar here stands for Charles I, both rulers who were killed because they were thought to pose a threat to the people's liberties'.³⁸ Yet subsequent references undermine this clear identification, in particular when Cromwell is (again) compared to the militarist Caesar, this time in a context which is, on the surface at least, approving:

A *Cæsar* he ere long to *Gaul*,
To *Italy* an *Hannibal*,
And to all States not free
Shall *Clymacterick* be.
(lines 101–104)

³⁵ David Norbrook states that May's *Continuation* 'significantly diluted Lucan's anti-Cæsarism', *Writing the English Republic*, p. 63.

³⁶ Margoliouth I, p. 296.

³⁷ The Ode is, in fact, full of small echoes of Lucan's epic—and of Horace's work—and, due to limits of space, these examples only scratch the surface of hugely complex literary relationships.

³⁸ Paul Hammond, 'Classical Texts: translations and transformations' in Stephen Zwicker (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature 1650–1740* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 143–161, p. 145.

Paul Hammond writes:

Here Cromwell is the Caesar who expanded the Roman empire through his foreign conquests, and yet since Caesar's untimely end has already been alluded to, it is difficult to expunge that part of his story from our memory as we ponder this image. (p. 145)

And it is even more difficult to expunge from our memory the echoes of Lucan at the beginning of the poem which cast Cromwell and Caesar as terrifying and destructive, enemies to the people. The subsequent reference to Hannibal raises further worries, as he was a figure who, despite his phenomenal successes, was ultimately defeated at the hands of the Romans; his fame for his phenomenal success coupled with his ultimate failure is perhaps apt for double-edged readings of Cromwell. Furthermore, for attentive readers, the Hannibal story might pick out alarming resonances in the poem. One of the most famous and decisive moments in the Roman wars with Hannibal was the slaughter of his brother Hasdrubal in the battle at the Metaurus river, after which the Romans returned Hasdrubal's severed head to Hannibal, causing him to withdraw.³⁹ Livy relates, with a sly acknowledgement that this detail might be artistic licence, either his own or somebody else's: 'The story is that Hannibal under the double blow of so great a public and personal distress exclaimed: "Now, at last, I see the destiny of Carthage plain!"'⁴⁰ This might find an oblique resonance in the earlier 'bleeding Head' which 'Did fright the Architects to run'. Bleeding heads and troubling resonances seem to multiply alarmingly in this poem, so that even in this most apparently clear-cut classical reference there are buried difficulties and anxieties.

How might we assess, overall, this hugely rich and suggestive set of references? Annabel Patterson suggests a possible solution when she argues that:

The identification of Cromwell [...] with Lucan's hated Julius Caesar, killer of Pompey, bringer of civil war, is balanced by the fact that the poet identifies himself through the poem's title with Horace's role as a counselor to Caesar Augustus,

³⁹ For accounts of Hannibal's successes, and ultimate defeat, see Nigel Bagnel, *The Punic Wars* (London: Hutchinson, 1990), and also Serge Lancel, *Hannibal*, translated by Antonia Nevill (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).

⁴⁰ Betty Radice (ed.), *Livy: The War with Hannibal*, translated by Aubrey de Sélincourt (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), p. 51.

personification of peaceful rule and cooperation between literary and political values.⁴¹

It is ironic that Patterson uses the word 'balanced', given that the idea of Marvell's as a 'balanced' view of politics is precisely what Patterson herself and others have fought so hard against,⁴² and we might wonder whether this is an apt word on this occasion. Do these opposing perspectives really *balance* against one another, or do they perplex the reader, raising more issues than they finally solve? David Norbrook, writing in the same vein as Patterson concludes that, although some critics have argued that Marvell is 'using the Horatian echoes to undermine and obliquely satirise Cromwell', in fact 'the Ode evokes Royalist genres [...] in order to subvert them, to return English poetry to a truer course'.⁴³ But this idea of 'subversion' is strangely certain and static—it posits a single thing which Marvell 'evokes' and a single thing which happens to it, namely subversion—and therefore seems inadequate to the shifting and constantly changing way in which we have already seen the Ode's classical allusions work. It is much harder to disentangle what is subversive and what is being subverted than Norbrook acknowledges, and certainly difficult to state confidently what 'true course' of poetry Marvell wants to promote. The classical allusions, playing against the figure of the forward youth—and against the portraits of Cromwell and Charles—do not lead us to the kinds of clear, and politically decisive solutions that Norbrook and Patterson would like them to.

What is, then, the effect, or the point, of such a tangled web of allusions? Paul Hammond concludes his brief consideration of classical influences on the Ode with the following reflections:

These allusions appear at first to locate Cromwell in a clear narrative of military success, and yet if we remind ourselves of the original Roman contexts, they turn

⁴¹ *Marvell and the Civic Crown*, p. 60. See also Nigel Smith, who introduces a short discussion of the Ode with an assertion that 'We are now able to understand very clearly the way in which poets during the Interregnum responded to the new age by reconstructing the relationship between English poetry and classical antecedents' (*Literature and Revolution*, p. 277); thus clarity, rather than perplexity, is emphasised.

⁴² See, for example Patterson's comment about 'the role that I and others have worked so hard during the last half of the twentieth century to rescue him from: the poet of disengagement, pastoral solitude, neo-Platonic philosophy', 'Andrew Marvell and the Revolution', p. 113; and David Norbrook, who states that the Ode 'has often been applauded for avoiding political partisanship, for maintaining an equal balance between Charles and Cromwell', before concluding himself that in fact it is 'grim, witty, exuberant, explosive, savage, elliptical, elegiac, apocalyptic, but not balanced', 'Marvell's Horatian Ode and the Politics of Genre', p. 147.

⁴³ Norbrook, 'Marvell's Horatian Ode and the Politics of Genre', pp. 149–150.

into narratives of hubris and nemesis. These various allusions suggest parallels, both large-scale and local, between England in 1650 and Rome in the years after the civil wars had ended but before the triumph of Augustus was secure. But the parallels are fragmentary, inconsistent, and contradictory, suggestive (teasing, even) rather than definitive, disturbing us and through their interaction disturbing one another. The reader faces a complex interpretative problem, as no coherent narrative pattern is able to triumph. The experience of reading the 'Horatian Ode' with Horace's own odes in mind becomes a lesson in the complexities of reading history and reading the present.⁴⁴

Although Hammond's technique is very much against the grain of current Marvell criticism—rather than using expertise to propose solutions to critical problems with the Ode, he insists that they must remain as problems—his lack of solution is true to the Ode's own intractable difficulties.⁴⁵ Marvell seems to show us that each classical reference is felicitous to some extent, but that single allusions prove to be inadequate, partial and, finally, unsatisfactory. In the light of the evidence of this thesis, we might propose a different kind of 'solution' as to why Marvell chose to import such radically contradictory classical references and echoes into his Ode. By using conflicting allusions, Marvell argues for the difficulties in interpreting and writing about this near-unprecedented moment in history. Writing through the classics, Marvell apparently suggest, hinders and obscures just as much as it illuminates, and the overall result is a powerful essay on the problems faced by writers, rather than the solutions they can deliver. The forward youth—part Horatian, part Lucanic, part Cavalier poet, and also perhaps part Tom May and even Marvell himself—stands in the shadows behind 'An Horatian Ode' as an acute reminder of these intense, irreconcilable difficulties.

3. Writing, Cromwell, and the Regicide

The predicament of the forward, and yet apparently unwilling, writer-youth is left hanging as Cromwell makes his devastating entrance, and yet the youth's dilemma must be re-considered after a careful look at the portrait of Cromwell and, in turn, with Cromwell's own intersection with the fate of Charles I. The portrait of

⁴⁴ Hammond, 'Classical Texts', p. 145.

⁴⁵ It is also truer to Marvell's own assertion (through Jonson) in 'Tom May's Death': 'How ill the measures of these States agree' (line 52). We have already seen the particularly acute pitfalls of identifying Marvell with opinions expressed in 'Tom May's Death', but this does suggest, at least, a certain wariness of too easy explanation by way of classical precedent.

Cromwell begins as the figure of the forward youth fades into the background, and although the linking word 'So' might suggest an identity between Cromwell and the youth, the initial picture of Cromwell we get could scarcely be further from a languishing poet:

So restless *Cromwel* could not cease
In the inglorious Arts of Peace,
But through adventurous War
Urged his active Star.
And, like the three-fork'd Lightning, first
Breaking the Clouds where it was nurst,
Did thorough his own Side
His fiery way divide.
(lines 9–16)

The analogy between the forward youth and Cromwell is immediately problematic, as Cromwell is 'restless' in his pursuit of the 'Arts of Peace' whereas the forward youth was apparently content with the peaceful '*Muses* dear'; Cromwell abandons the arts of peace as an act of choice, born of restlessness and, it emerges, a fearsome ambition, whilst the forward youth has to be prodded or even forced into action ('Must now'). Already too there is a sense, in 'could not', of Cromwell being driven (though willingly) by forces beyond his control as much as he himself pushes, an idea given its most apt (and famous) expression in the line 'Urged his active Star'. Marvell effectively sits on the fence here, refusing to commit himself to a thoroughgoing argument for Cromwell as a self-made man, and yet not entirely investing in the idea of Cromwell as fate-driven.

The following image is more alarmingly direct, as Cromwell becomes a lightning bolt who appears to shoot through his own side. This image works as a political reference—to Cromwell's astonishing rise through the Parliamentary forces—and also as a powerful argument for Cromwell as a kind of 'author of himself'.⁴⁶ In the use of the word 'thorough', however, there might be a partially buried political reference. 'Thorough' was the word used specifically to describe the oppressive policies of Laud and Wentworth, and so there might be a hint here of the

⁴⁶ William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, 5.3. 36. All Shakespeare quotations will be taken from Stephen Greenblatt (ed.), *The Norton Shakespeare* (London: Norton, 1997). It is interesting that, as in the case of Cromwell, the idea of self-creation is undermined: by Shakespeare this is achieved by his use of the conditional 'As if' which precedes the pronouncement.

clichéd argument that one who overthrows a tyrant becomes a tyrant.⁴⁷ The ‘thorough’ policies of these powerful churchmen were, of course, one of the most important factors in the creation of an opposition to the King strong enough to wage a successful war against him. Marvell suggests, (albeit obliquely), that Cromwell’s own aggressive politics are comparable to the Laudian ‘Thorough’.

We might detect other, more directly stated reservations in the portrait of Cromwell, given that he sees the ‘Arts of Peace’ as ‘inglorious’ suggesting, as we have seen Marvell so often do, that the pursuit of worldly success is driven not by noble sentiments, but by personal vanity and an accompanying desire for glory. The subsequent course of Cromwell-as-lightning-bolt is increasingly alarming:

For ’tis all one to Courage high
 The Emulous or Enemy;
 And with such to inclose
 Is more than to oppose.
 Then burning through the Air he went,
 And Pallaces and Temples rent:
 And *Cæsars* head at last
 Did through his Laurels blast.
 ’Tis Madness to resist or blame
 The force of angry Heavens flame:
 And, if we would speak true,
 Much to the Man is due.
 (lines 17–28)

The initial, and unambiguously positive, description of Cromwell’s ‘Courage high’—meaning great, impressive courage—is called into question by what follows, as if ‘Courage high’ is actually a euphemism for ‘grasping ambition’; an individual who sees no difference between the ‘Emulous’ and the ‘Enemy’, and who would rather be surrounded by enemies than by ambitious friends is a figure about whom we are being asked to worry. The image of Cromwell as fire-bolt is perhaps at its most terrifying in this passage, as it is imagined that his own allies, just as his enemies, have no chance against him. Although one might read a Puritan anti-Catholic zeal in the idea of Cromwell tearing down Temples, there is also the suggestion of a dangerous ungodly force blasting through the country which is underlined by the possibly double-meaning of ‘angry Heavens flame’: it is not entirely clear if

⁴⁷ *OED* has ‘Thorough-going action or policy: in Eng. Hist. (with capital T) applied to that of Strafford and Laud in the reign of Charles I, and sometimes to that of Cromwell as Lord Protector’, although the

Cromwell acts for God, or against Him, and the syntax leaves the possibility open that Cromwell is a force which is provoking Heaven's anger. This is enforced by a reference to the regicide in which, as we have seen, Charles—God's representative on earth—becomes a Caesar undone by rebels. The path of Cromwell's lightning bolt goes from Temples and Palaces to the King's head, and might therefore suggest an almost willfully destructive path against all sacred institutions of the country.

The reference to Caesar here might be additionally perturbing, however, because the Civil War which followed the killing of Julius Caesar was long and protracted, and not finally settled until Augustus became emperor—the emperor to whom Horace wrote his Odes. Does Marvell imagine that there will be a similarly long wait for the country to achieve peace after England's own regicide? If he imagines himself as a Horace, then perhaps his Augustus is far in the future, rather than being immediately embodied by Cromwell. The matter is thrown into more doubt by the fact that this passage, as we have seen, echoes Lucan's horrified descriptions of the awesome and awful power of Caesar. Cromwell is somehow *at once* a terrifying Caesar and a noble rebel against this Caesar. In the surface meaning of the words, Cromwell is the latter, but in the echoes of Lucan which resound through these lines, Cromwell is assuredly the former. This might suggest that Cromwell embodies the virtues of both the rebel and the despot, but equally it could be an act of radical undermining, taking praise away from Cromwell just as it is given; boldly asserting Cromwell's 'democratic' credentials through a positive comparison with Roman democrats and simultaneously undermining that assertion by implying that Cromwell might, in fact, be a tyrant. Cromwell is in this passage somehow *both* an impressive rebel *and* a tyrant, suggesting again, the difficulties of interpreting him clearly and unequivocally.

We might also pause over the imagined head of Charles/Caesar blasting through laurels. The laurel tree was thought to be resistant to lightning, and thus the laurel wreath protected its wearer from lightning strike.⁴⁸ This serves, on one level, to make Cromwell's lightning bolt all the more powerful, given that it easily blasts through that which is supposed to be immune from such attack. Yet there might be

first use of the latter is in 1900. Perhaps Marvell pre-empts this duality of meaning, although Marvell's 'thorough' is not capitalised, so this point cannot be pushed too far.

⁴⁸ See Margoliouth I, p. 298 and also Friedman, *Marvell's Pastoral Art*, p. 259.

further resonance in turning Charles into Caesar at this particular moment: given that laurels were by tradition given for poetic, as well as military achievement, is there significance in Cromwell blasting the King's head through the award for poetic achievement? Marvell certainly uses images of poetic wreaths with impressive and complex effect elsewhere in his poetry, so it is hard to imagine that the word 'Laurels' is used here without importing some reference to literary matters. Certainly the loss of poetry through the Civil War was something about which many, Marvell included, were concerned, and we might link this image to one in Marvell's poem to Lovelace 'Our Civill Wars have lost the Civicke crowne' (line 12). In 'An Horatian Ode' Marvell appears to blame Cromwell specifically, not just the fact of the 'Civill Wars', for the loss, implicitly associating Charles, on the other hand, with poetic achievement. We might see this phrase in the Ode as a kind of shocking re-writing of that earlier line from the poem to Lovelace, whereby the 'Civicke crowne' is literally blasted from the head of Charles, and the poets associated with him, by Cromwell.

This grand and complex imaginative process is immediately, and perhaps shockingly, deflated by the trimetric couplet: 'And, if we would speak true, | Much to the Man is due'. This is, predictably, often taken as a final assertion of Marvell's approval of Cromwell, and yet its register and status within the poem needs to be carefully noted. As a shorter couplet than the tetrameters which precede it, it inevitably has a somewhat bathetic effect. Also, using the word 'man' to describe what has been set up as an extraordinary force of nature strikes an odd note. It should also be noticed that this couplet is in the conditional—'*if* we would speak true'—and so the assertion is qualified, and leads us to question where this poem is 'speaking true' and where it is speaking falsely. 'Would' picks up on the important 'would' in the opening lines of the poem; we have seen how the question of whether the forward youth 'would' appear hangs over the poem, and perhaps the issue of speaking true is therefore yet another question which Marvell leaves open. As the Ode continues, these notes of caution about Cromwell are underlined and the poem even descends into something approaching comedy:

Who, from his private Gardens, where
He liv'd reserved and austere,
As if his highest plot
To plant the Bergamot.
(lines 29–32)

As is often the case with Marvell—we might think of the comic portrait of Fairfax laying his gardens out as a fort, or the ‘green’ narrator of ‘The Garden’ itself—gardens are a site of subtle comedy. Here, the notion of Cromwell’s private austerity is gently mocked by the suggestion of his attempts to grow the bergamot, an exotic citrus fruit tree, used to make prized and deliciously scented oil. According to the *OED*, the tree derives its name from the Italian town Bergamo, and so there is something mildly comical in the rhyme ‘plot [...] bergamot’ which enforces the blunt Anglicisation of the Italian. Cromwell is, somehow, both ambitious in his gardening projects, and slightly, and comically, out of his depth, trying (plotting) too hard. The six lines that follow the spectacular and extended image of the ‘force of angry Heavens flame’ thus serve to deflate and undermine it, surrounding Cromwell instead with a certain amount of humour. Moreover, this whole episode sees the narrative of the poem doubling back on itself: having powerfully described Cromwell as an unstoppable force, the poem undercuts that force by going back to the time before Cromwell had begun his remarkable rise. This back-and-forth movement, echoed in the poem’s poetic structure, is something which too often goes unnoticed, but is again crucial to the way in which the Ode works to assert and then undermine, to think and re-think.

What seems to be happening here, then, is not simply an assessment of Cromwell, but rather a testing out of ways in which to write about him adequately. Marvell seeks out language and metaphors which are sufficiently sinewy and dense to do justice to Cromwell and his impressive, but terrifying achievements. A good example of this technique is the ambiguous question: ‘What field of all the Civil Wars, | Where his were not the deepest Scars?’ (lines 45–46). Posed as a question, this is necessarily a tentative pronouncement, as if it is possible that the answer could be ‘many’, rather than ‘none’. The poetic speaker, in other words, puts himself in a position of uncertainty, rather than confidence in relation to Cromwell. Furthermore, the proposition itself is fraught with ambiguities. We might ask whether the scars are on Cromwell himself, or scars made by Cromwell on his enemies? Either reading allows Cromwell to be heroic (as a courageous, self-sacrificing man, or as an effective, damaging soldier); they also, on the other hand, could suggest his ineffectiveness as a soldier or his being *too* brutal and wounding of others. Another

possible resonance is built on these complexities, namely, the idea that the Civil War, and Cromwell in particular have, somehow, permanently scarred the fields of England itself. This idea was common enough, and Marvell himself invests in similar ideas in 'Upon Appleton House' when he states that 'War all this doth overgrow: | We Ord'nance Plant and Powder sow' (lines 343–344), as if the Civil War somehow plants the seeds of future warfare in the soil of England.

The following episode uses a different model by which to understand Cromwell, that of the Machiavellian manipulator:

And *Hampton* shows what part
He had of wiser Art.
Where, twining subtile fears with hope,
He wove a Net of such a scope,
That *Charles* himself might chase
To *Caresbrooks* narrow case.
(lines 47–52)

Michael Wilding is confident about this passage, declaring that 'the point is that Marvell, along with many contemporaries, believed that Cromwell had planned the episode and admires him for doing so' (p. 129). Wilding is right that it is clear enough that the Ode invests in a story which we now know to be false—that of Cromwell subtly entrapping Charles by allowing his escape from Hampton court—but it is much less clear whether the Ode expresses unqualified admiration for this action. 'Art', as we have seen in Chapter 4, had distinctly negative connotations, and in conjunction with 'wiser' it might have especially troubling resonances. At the end of the poem we are reminded again of this line with: 'The same *Arts* that did *gain* | A *Pow'r* must it *maintain*' (lines 119–120). As we shall see, the end of 'An Horatian Ode' is far from being unambiguously positive about the future of Cromwell's (potentially dark) arts. Moreover, Cromwell's 'Net', made out of 'subtile fears' and 'hope', sounds distinctly sinister, as if he is able, like a Shakespearean villain, to play on his victims' hidden ambitions as well as their deepest fears. On the other hand, these things have been remarkably effective, and Cromwell has, as it were, got his prey, with Charles chasing *himself* into confinement. Again, Marvell seems to be pushing at the limits of the available conceptual resources in order to do justice to the interpretative difficulties surrounding Cromwell, and asks himself repeatedly how

one might assess, and therefore write about, the astonishing events which resulted from the Civil War.

The crux of the poem, however, is the portrait of the execution of Charles itself and its aftermath:

That thence the *Royal Actor* born
The *Tragick Scaffold* might adorn:
While round the armed Bands
Did clap their bloody hands.
He nothing common did or mean
Upon that memorable Scene:
But with his keener Eye
The Axes edge did try:
Nor called the *Gods* with vulgar spight
To vindicate his helpless Right,
But bow'd his comely Head,
Down as upon a Bed.
This was that memorable Hour
Which first assur'd the forced Pow'r.
(lines 53–66)

This portrait is clearly a problem for David Norbrook's project in *Writing the English Republic*, given that it appears to show pity and admiration for the dying King, and Norbrook's account of it is necessarily partial, arguing that 'the retreat into privacy and passivity is consistent with a general Republican critique of courtly culture' (p. 267). It might be consistent with general aspects of Republican arguments, but this hardly does justice to the weighty dignity which Marvell gives Charles here.⁴⁹ The language used to describe Charles is eulogistic: the King is 'comely' rather than vulgar and spiteful; he is neither 'common' nor 'mean', despite the huge pressure of the situation. In an astonishing move, Marvell imagines Charles reversing his own recent (and hugely controversial) trial, by putting the executing axe itself on trial. The immediate contrast between Charles's dignified acceptance and the brutal 'forced Pow'r' underlines the huge gulf between Cromwell and Charles. However, it is also important to note the ambiguity of Marvell's praise of Charles. The idea of helplessness, although possibly calling forth our sympathy might equally suggest, of a King, that he is weak and thus compromised as a ruler. And in denying vulgarity and commonness we might detect a suggestion of the kind of high-handed regal

⁴⁹ Moreover, Nancy Klein Maguire in 'The Theatrical Mask/Masque of Politics: The Case of Charles I' in *Journal of British Studies* 28 (1989), pp. 1–22, shows how viewing the regicide as tragedy was a

behaviour which was seen by many as a factor in causing the Civil War. The word 'common' might have a particular charge in relation to Charles's trial and execution, as the first words in his trial were addressed to 'Charles Stuart' from 'the Commons of England', and the charges against Charles included acting against 'the public interest, common right, liberty, justice and peace of the people of this nation'.⁵⁰ Ignoring or acting against the interests of both the House of Commons and the common people of England were key charges against Charles, and there might therefore be a hint of irony in Marvell's apparent praise here. To put this another way, as was the case with Cromwell, finding apt models for describing Charles—and his apparently dignified behaviour at his execution—is made into a necessarily vexed business by Marvell.

What immediately follows rather enforces the sense of uneasiness with the regicide:

So when they did design
The *Capitols* first Line,
A bleeding Head where they begun,
Did fright the Architects to run;
And yet in that the *State*
Foresaw it's happy Fate.
(lines 67–72)

These lines at once suggest an affirmative model by which this horrific event might be understood, and yet such is the nature of that model that we are left wondering how effective it can be in assuaging doubts about the regicide. As we have seen, the Roman History which is evoked in the Ode is more often violent and bloody than simply 'happy', and I shall return to these lines later.

Following the depiction of Charles's execution, though, the poem becomes, on the surface at least, more affirmative, describing Cromwell's astonishing achievements overseas, and his humble, obedient relationship with Parliament. The ambiguities of the portrait, though still present if sought out,⁵¹ are far less pronounced than in the first section of the poem, as if once Charles has been executed, undesirable and terrifying though that may have been, Cromwell can now

typical Royalist manoeuvre: 'Royalists [...] specifically recast the trial and execution into "tragedy"', p. 11.

⁵⁰ Quoted by C.V. Wedgwood, *The Trial of Charles I* (London: Collins, 1964), pp. 129–130.

⁵¹ See, for example, Cleanth Brooks's aforementioned account of this section of the poem, which argues convincingly for some key ambiguities.

be celebrated as the extraordinary and successful leader that he is. Cromwell is imagined as a hawk catching its prey, though the 'Falckner has her sure' (line 96). The crescendo of praise is continued with 'What may not then our *Isle* presume | While Victory his Crest does plume!' (lines 97–98), before Marvell catalogues the possible victories for England under Cromwell, who, 'to all States not free | Shall *Clymacterick* be' (lines 103–104). It is in this section of 'An Horatian Ode' that Marvell sounds most like the Milton of 'To the Lord General Cromwell' in which Cromwell is portrayed as moving unstoppably 'through a cloud [...] of war' (lines 1–2). In that poem, Milton celebrates Cromwell's astonishing military achievements, and there is little room for pause or consideration under the pressure of Milton's attempted political persuasion of Cromwell on the issue of the established church.⁵² At this point 'An Horatian Ode', then, seems to be at its most like the Miltonic, politically committed model, and here it might almost fit Michael Wilding's reading which, as we have seen, suggests that 'since Charles is now dead, the alternatives collapse into the single possibility of Cromwell' (p. 120). Notes of caution might be detected in the image of Cromwell as a hawk/killing machine hunting for his country and irony in the idea of Cromwell conquering virtually the whole world. Nevertheless, in this section of the poem it might be argued more plausibly that such ambiguities are somewhat crushed, as in Milton's poem, under the rolling onslaught of Cromwell. The narrative, for a while, proceeds briskly and does not look back, or turn back on itself, as it repeatedly did in the first half of the poem. It is as if, for a time at least, Marvell can write confidently and positively about this most confident of political and military leaders, and Marvell appears to have found a voice and a hyperbolic register in which to talk about Cromwell and his achievements.

But the poem has a final, devastating, twist, because just as the portrait of Cromwell appeared to be overwhelmingly affirmative, the poem returns our thoughts to the forward youth and his dilemma at the start of the poem:

The *Pict* no shelter now shall find
 Within his party-colour'd Mind;
 But from this Valour sad
 Shrink underneath the Plad:

⁵² The poem is specifically addressed to a committee, including Cromwell, 'for Propagation of the Gospel', and Carey asserts that 'Milton urges him [Cromwell] away from establishment altogether' (Carey, *The Minor Poems*, pp. 325–326).

Happy if in the tufted brake
The *English Hunter* him mistake:
Not lay his Hounds in near
The *Caledonian* Deer.
But thou the Wars and Fortunes Son
March indefatigably on.
(lines 105–114)

Marvell returns to the proposed Scottish campaign, and apparently fears rather than relishes Cromwell's success. The Scots had sided with Charles II, certainly, and yet the Scottish alliance with the Royalists was an uneasy one;⁵³ in fact the Scots Presbyterians were natural allies rather than enemies of Cromwell. The prospect of this war in particular, as has been noted, caused Fairfax, Marvell's future employer, to resign his command of the army. Marvell's lines share this sense of unease with the Scottish war and seem to invest in the idea of the Scots hiding and escaping the English rather than being caught and killed. We might think, for a moment, of Marvell's extraordinary imaginative engagement with the needless death of a fawn at the hands of 'wanton Troopers' in 'The Nymph Complaining on the Death of her Fawn'. The soldiers that murder the fawn in that poem, in an echo of 'An Horatian Ode', are urged by the Nymph that 'they should wash their guilty hands | In this warm life-blood' (lines 18–19). In imaging the English led by Cromwell as hunting dogs and the Scots deer, Marvell seems to invest in the same kind of disgust present in 'The Nymph Complaining'. Moreover, although editors have glossed 'sad' as meaning 'steadfast' (which is certainly one of its meanings) there must also be a hint here of the sad waste of Cromwell using his undoubted and terrifying 'Valour' against people who should be his allies. And the 'But' of line 113 means that this potentially affirmative couplet is not simply a celebration of Cromwell's indefatigable military strength but, rather, an assertion that Cromwell has to march on, now that he has started, even if that course of action might be undesirable.

Such reservations about the brutality and necessity of the Scottish campaign inevitably feed back into issues raised in the opening of the poem, and suggest that the forward youth's forced dilemma between fighting and writing is still an active one. The 'thou' of line 113, the first direct address to Cromwell in the poem, might serve, finally to separate the forward youth from Cromwell, and suggest that whilst

⁵³ See Mark Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed: Britain 1603–1714* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1996), pp. 199–200 for an overview of this alliance.

Cromwell *must* march on regardless of the difficulties with which that course of action is fraught, the predicament of the forward youth remains. The final lines, with their echoing of the ‘Shadows’ into which the youth withdraws in the opening, deepen these anxieties:

And for the last effect
Still keep thy Sword erect:
Besides the force it has to fright
The Spirits of the shady Night,
The same *Arts* that did *gain*
A *Pow'r* must it *maintain*.
(lines 115–120)

Cromwell’s relentless onward march now seems like a worrying necessity; the ‘must’ echoes back to the imperative ‘must’ which was previously directed at the forward youth, but now turns on Cromwell himself. Cromwell is no longer a force akin to Lucan’s Caesar crossing the Rubicon and forcing those in his path to take up arms; he is *himself* impelled by those forces which were once driven by him. The images of forcing and compulsion which have gathered ominously in the Ode—from the opening ‘Must now’ and ‘’Tis time’, to the image of the ‘force of angry Heavens flame’ becoming a ‘forced Pow’r’—at this point rebound on Cromwell himself, as his fate is no longer in his own hands—it is now decided for him. Here the poem’s view of Cromwell is a far cry from that of Milton, who urges Cromwell to remember that ‘peace hath her victories | No less renowned than war’,⁵⁴ thus suggesting that Cromwell might be as effective in peace as in war. Marvell, on the contrary, imagines Cromwell as a martial hero who, having long abandoned ‘the inglorious Arts of Peace’ (line 10) in favour of the glory of military achievement, *must* now continue at all costs.

4. Civil War, Regicide, and the Uncanny

The final lines of ‘An Horatian Ode’ are primarily uneasy, however, because they are just that: uncanny, eerie, uncomfortable. They re-introduce a sense of unease into the poem at a moment when we might have thought that things were becoming more certain. Thomas M. Greene has suggested—against the grain of most recent criticism

⁵⁴ ‘To the Lord General Cromwell’, lines 10–11.

of 'An Horatian Ode'—that the 'true subject of the poem seems to me to be the intrusion of the uncanny into history'.⁵⁵ He declares the image of the bleeding head to be especially uncanny, pointing out that the severed head is one of Freud's examples of this phenomenon.⁵⁶ We might also recall that the 'bleeding Head' of line 69 is not the only severed head in the Ode: Marvell also, in a grimly exuberant moment, imagines Cromwell blasting the head of Charles-as-Caesar through his own laurels in lines 23–24 and, as we have seen, there might also be an oblique reference in the Ode to the bleeding head of Hannibal's brother. And not only is Charles's head twice severed in the Ode, the severing of a King's head is *doubly* uncanny, given that the King was, in a commonly held conceptual metaphor, the head of the body-politic. To behead a King is, then, to create two severed heads, one of a man, and one of the imagined political nation.⁵⁷ This uncanny action on which the Ode reports might, then, explain why other such elements creep into the Ode. For example, Freud states that uncertainty as to 'whether a particular figure in the story is a human being or an automaton' produces an uncanny effect,⁵⁸ and a version of this occurs in the initial description of Cromwell as an inhuman object, a lightning bolt. Cromwell might also fit Freud's description of the uncanny in that he is an individual who is portrayed as carrying out his intentions 'with the help of special powers' (p. 365). Also uncanny are 'manifestations of insanity' (p. 347)—which briefly make an appearance in the Ode, when it is declared 'madness' to resist Cromwell—as are hints of doubling and repetition between Cromwell and the forward youth. Linked to Freud's idea of the double is the idea of 'shadows' (p. 356), which, as we have seen, provide a crucial framing device for the Ode. Freud reserves the 'highest degree' of the uncanny, however, for 'the return of the dead, and to spirits and ghosts' (p. 364). The fact that the opening is beset with the ghosts of various writers including Horace, Lucan, and Tom May, and the fact that the closing lines warn against the ill-defined '*Spirits of the shady Night*' (line 128) might suggest that Marvell's poem, especially the ending,

⁵⁵ 'The Balance of Power in Marvell's "Horatian Ode"', p. 69. Unfortunately, this is not an observation which Greene goes on to consider fully.

⁵⁶ See Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny' in *The Penguin Freud Library Volume 14: Art and Literature* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), pp. 339–376, in particular p. 366.

⁵⁷ See Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology*, 2nd edn with a new preface by William Chester Jordan (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997), for an interesting, if exceptionally complex, account of the phenomenon of medieval and Renaissance monarchs possessing a real and an imaginary, public, body.

⁵⁸ Freud, 'The Uncanny', p. 347.

is, by Freud's definition, uncanny in the 'highest degree'. All these things augment the general air of uncertainty which surrounds the Ode, and should cause us to question all the more readings which propose political certainty as the central tenet of the poem.

There might, however, be another, more shadowy, but more crucial, presence in the Ode even than these uncanny moments suggest. In the famously poignant section of the poem that deals with Charles's execution, theatrical language multiplies, forcing itself insistently on the reader, asking difficult questions about how this event is to be interpreted: 'Royal Actor', 'Tragick Scaffold', 'clap their [...] hands', 'memorable Scene', and 'bow'd' all invite us to (or insist that we must) think about this momentous event as we might think about a play. This might have a historical resonance, given that not only was Charles associated with the theatre, but also the theatres and their celebrated traditions of writing had been closed down at the start of the Civil War. Furthermore, Charles's execution took place, famously, on a scaffold outside the Banqueting House in Whitehall, a building which was built by Inigo Jones—himself of course a great theatrical figure—and in which Charles had acted in masques.⁵⁹ The regicide was, then, already an event with strong theatrical associations, and one observer relates how he 'saw him [Charles] come out of the Banqueting-house on the scaffold with the same unconcernedness and motion, that he usually had, when he entred into it on a Masque night'.⁶⁰ By deliberately calling the theatrical dimension of the regicide to our attention, Marvell gives an oblique yet poignant reminder of an age—an age of outstanding writing—which had been lost when the Civil War began, but was now all the more surely gone, the King having been executed.

What does the poem gain, or lose, from such an allusive manoeuvre? Nancy Klein Maguire has suggested that the likening of the regicide to a staged tragedy links the Ode to Royalist propaganda after the execution.⁶¹ This might well be the case, but perhaps something else, more complex, is at work. Another possible, highly fertile, source for Marvell's theatrical analogy in the Ode is suggested by an echo in its final lines of an earlier moment of staged regicide, in Shakespeare's *Richard II*: when

⁵⁹ See Wedgwood, *The Trial of Charles I*, p. 172.

⁶⁰ Quoted by Nancy Klein Maguire, 'The Theatrical Mask/Masque of Politics: The Case of Charles I', p. 18.

⁶¹ A point made explicit in her article when lines 53–64 of Marvell's Ode are quoted, p. 10.

Exton informs Bolingbroke that he has murdered Richard, Bolingbroke, both delighted and terrified by the action, seeks to place the full guilt on Exton, ordering him that he must 'With Cain go wander through the shades of night, | And never show thy head by day nor light' (*Richard II*, 5.6. 43–44). The penultimate couplet of Marvell's Ode—assessing as it does the extent to which Cromwell's sword has 'the force [...] to fright | The Spirits of the shady Night'—shares with these lines from Shakespeare a rhyme on 'night', and the linguistic details of 'shades' and 'night'. The context of the utterances might also lend weight to the possibility that these two texts relate to one another: both Exton and Cromwell are regicides; both speakers, (Bolingbroke and Marvell's poetic narrator) seem to be extremely anxious about the long-term consequences of killing a king.⁶² Also, the parallels between the events described by 'An Horatian Ode' and Shakespeare's most popular set of history plays, the Second Tetralogy, might be more widely compelling. Both works describe a civil war, the overthrow of the king, his death at the hands of the usurpers, and the triumphant figure in both has been described as a Machiavellian ruler who proves that the 'antient Rights' of a 'legitimate' King, ultimately, 'hold or break | As Men are strong or weak.' (lines 39–40). In this way, *Richard II* provides a parallel for Charles I, as Henry V does for Cromwell. Might Marvell have had Shakespeare's dramatisation of a civil war and regicide in mind when he wrote 'An Horatian Ode'? This is something which it is impossible, and perhaps undesirable, to prove, but nevertheless we might pertinently ask whether the supernatural, ghostly elements of both the Second Tetralogy and 'An Horatian Ode' find a common root in the unthinkable, terrifying idea of killing a king, and suspect that Shakespeare might have provided for Marvell a sufficiently complex literary model by which to depict epoch-changing political events and characters.

⁶² This particular echo has not been previously noted, although Howard Erskine-Hill mentions, briefly, the more general parallel between the texts, suggesting that 'it is significant how poignantly this text ["An Horatian Ode"] recalls the dramatic presentation of an earlier age', the dramatic presentation being that of 'King Richard and King Henry in the text of *Richard II*', in *Poetry and the Realm of Politics*, p. 1. G.R. Hibbard, too, suggests a link, stating that 'Marvell regards and interprets the great events of his time as a tragic dramatist might have done', going on to relate 'An Horatian Ode' to, amongst other plays, *Richard II* via a larger model of 'the tragic', 'The Early Seventeenth Century and the Tragic View of Life' in *Renaissance and Modern Studies* 5 (1961), pp. 5–28, p. 9. The possibility that Marvell might be reading events through Shakespeare is enforced by several echoes in the Ode of *Julius Caesar*, in particular of 3.1, in which the conspirators wash their hands in Caesar's blood, and which also imagines the killing in terms of a theatrical event. This is an interesting literary relationship but, as I will hope to show, the Second Tetralogy, more than *Julius Caesar*, provides particularly apposite literary-political models for understanding the Ode.

We might first notice that—like ‘An Horatian Ode’—the Second Tetralogy ends on an uneasy note, the words of the epilogue offering a reminder of the unfortunate events which followed Henry V’s death:

Small time, but in that small most greatly lived
This star of England. Fortune made his sword,
By which the world’s best garden he achieved,
And of it left his son imperial lord.
Henry the Sixth, in infant bands crowned king
Of France and England, did this king succeed,
Whose state so many had the managing
That they lost France and made his England bleed,
Which oft our stage hath shown—and, for their sake,
In your fair minds let this acceptance take.
(*Henry V*, Epilogue, 5–14)

The language in this worried, and worrying, epilogue—the idea of losing France and making England bleed—reverberates back through the Tetralogy to *Richard II*, in which images of English blood and bleeding are remarkably profuse. For example, Richard, during his stand-off with the traitors in Act III warns that if he is overthrown:

Ten thousand bloody crowns of mothers’ sons
Shall ill become the flower of England’s face,
Change the complexion of her maid-pale peace
To scarlet indignation and bedew
Her pasture’s grass with faithful English blood.
(3.3. 95–99)

Later, Carlisle warns Bolingbroke that if he takes the crown ‘The blood of English shall manure the ground, | And future ages groan for this foul act’ (4.1. 128–129). These prophecies prove accurate, and the very first speech of *Henry IV Part 1* sees Henry bemoaning the draining civil battles he has already had to fight. His assertion that ‘No more the thirsty entrance of this soil | Shall daub her lips with her own children’s blood’ (1.1. 5–7), ostensibly signalling an end to the ‘civil butchery’ (1.1. 13), in fact proves to be the beginning of a reign continually threatened by rebellion. But in *Henry V*, the blood imagery undergoes a striking reversal: it is now *France* that bleeds, not England. After the defeat at Harfleur, the French King describes ‘Harry England, that sweeps through our land | With pennons painted in the blood of Harfleur’ (3.5. 48–49). Similarly, the temporarily defiant French Herald declares that ‘For th’effusion of our blood, the muster of his kingdom too faint a number’ (3.6.

117–118) and Henry's reply is the promise that 'We shall your tawny ground with your red blood | Discolour' (3.6. 160–161), and he is good to his word. It is as if Henry has found a radical solution to England's problems: he has healed her wounds, in this reading of the play's imagery, and has turned her ferocious—even suicidal—wounding force outwards. Returning to the end of *Henry V* with these image shifts in mind, it seems highly charged that 'Henry the Sixth [...] made his England bleed', as it reverses this pattern, re-opening the wounds healed by Henry V. More than this, it forces us to re-read or re-consider the Tetralogy with this in mind, looking back to the imagery of 'England bleeding' and seeing it as stretching on into the future beyond Henry V's reign which now might seem, like the individual play itself as performed on stage, an ephemeral burst of glory.⁶³

As we have seen, 'An Horatian Ode' concludes on a similarly uneasy note, and it might be tempting to read the closing lines—particularly if Marvell is reading contemporary events partly through Shakespeare's histories—as a prophetic warning that Cromwell's achievements, like Henry's, will not long survive his death:⁶⁴

And for the last effect
Still keep thy Sword erect:
Besides the force it has to fright
The Spirits of the shady Night,
The same *Arts* that did *gain*
A *Pow'r* must it *maintain*.
(lines 115–120)

The down-to-earth, practical advice of 'keep thy sword erect', the trite double rhyme insisting on the almost banal nature of this truism, is endorsed by the final couplet which, similarly, offers sound counsel to a political leader.⁶⁵ But the penultimate couplet, as we have seen, strikes a discordant note, partly because the upright sword is not imagined as an effective defensive weapon, but as a (possibly ineffective) weapon against supernatural, underworld forces. Playing on the similarity in shape between a sword and a crucifix (like Lorenzo in *The Spanish Tragedy*, who, offering

⁶³ The fact that it also points backwards into Shakespeare's own theatrical past (the *Henry VI* plays), underlines the extent to which the end suggests a vicious circle rather than a triumphant finale.

⁶⁴ If this is prophecy, then it is fairly accurate, as Richard Cromwell took his father's place and, partly thanks to his lack of political ability, the Restoration came quickly afterwards. See Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Restored*, pp. 213–239.

⁶⁵ John Wallace, in *Destiny His Choice*, notes that this couplet is standard political advice of the time (pp. 96–97), and Brian Vickers, in his article 'Machiavelli and Marvell's "Horatian Ode"' in *Notes*

Pederingano his sword, orders him to 'Swear on this cross', 2.1. 87), this forces us to re-read the previous couplet with renewed anxiety and caution.⁶⁶ Indeed, as well as being 'something that wounds or kills, a cause of death or destruction' another suggestive meaning *OED* gives to 'sword' is 'a weapon of attack in spiritual warfare'. Our previous perception of the advice as slightly banal is revealed as inadequate through this rapid image shift from sword to crucifix, and through the shift from the human to the spiritual world. With this in mind, we might also re-think the 'arts' of the penultimate line, and wonder whether they are beyond the purely political, Machiavellian 'arts' which Norbrook and Vickers suggest. We have seen in Chapter 4 the possible negative overtones of the word 'art' in the period, and in this context we might additionally think of 'black arts',⁶⁷ and imagine that Cromwell might have need of alarmingly shady forces if he is to continue to be successful. We might also note that, as well as arguing that Cromwell must use such forces in the future, the line read in this context darkly implies that Cromwell, in gaining his power, has used those 'same Arts' in the past as well.

The disturbing penultimate couplet of 'An Horatian Ode' might, then, occupy an analogous position in the poem to that which the line 'made his England bleed' does in Shakespeare's Second Tetralogy. From the beginning of the Ode, as we have seen, there is a significant sense of unease regarding the act of regicide. Particularly relevant here are the poignant lines on Charles's execution, in which the theatrical imagery turns sour as the regicides clap their 'bloody hands' (line 56) at the scene, and the extended image of Cromwell as a dangerous and uncontrollable force in lines

and *Queries* 234 (1989), pp. 32–38, suggests a strong connection between ideas of gaining and maintaining power and Machiavelli's thinking in *The Prince*.

⁶⁶ Quoted from Philip Edwards (ed.), *The Spanish Tragedy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977). See also David Norbrook and H.R. Woodhuysen (eds), *The Penguin Book of Renaissance Verse*, p. 169 and also Margoliouth I, p. 302, both of which argue that the sword is a pre-Christian underworld weapon, *not* a crucifix. In the latter, it is asserted by Legouis (contradicting Margoliouth's original note) that the idea of the sword hilt as cross 'cannot hold for various reasons, among them the Puritan's hostility to all representations of the Cross', who goes on to tell us 'the true explanation' which is the sword as a glinting defence against underworld forces. Below this possibility is explored, but in response to the certain dismissal to the idea of sword as crucifix, one might respond that this idea was commonplace (see, amongst other places, *Hamlet*, 1.5 as well as *The Spanish Tragedy* 2.1) and that to close down this possibility in favour of 'truth' about the poem seems unnecessarily limiting. It is, in fact, exactly this type of multiple possibility with which the poem constantly, and deliberately, seems to engage us.

⁶⁷ *OED* (1) has 'black art' as dating from the late sixteenth century and meaning: 'The art of performing supernatural acts by intercourse with the spirits of the dead or with the devil himself'. This would be particularly relevant to the uncanny elements to the Ode discussed earlier.

13–26, ‘burning through the Air’, ‘the force of angry Heavens flame’. This might be compared to the sense of unease in *Richard II* and the two parts of *Henry IV* created by the excessive use of ‘blood’ previously described. But in lines 71–112 of the Ode, Cromwell is no longer a lightning bolt, but a diligent public servant or tameable ‘Falcon high’ (line 92) and, reassuringly, the ‘Falckner has her sure’ (line 96). In other words, Cromwell is controlled by Parliament.⁶⁸ As in *Henry V*, the blood is now flowing elsewhere: where Cromwell was previously making the ‘deepest Scars’ in the Civil War, he is now channelling his energy outwards to the ‘Irish’ and the ‘Pict’, and this sense of aggression in control might allow a celebratory reading of the previous lightning imagery. The penultimate couplet, however, like the reference to Henry VI at the end of *Henry V*, renews the sense of unease about Cromwell and his thoroughgoing methods. It disallows a reading of the poem as progression from uncertainty to certainty or as a conclusive argument on the virtue of its hero. Rather, it demands that the poem is read and re-read, never allowing it to be imagined as a stable, single view of politics. Perhaps this could be described as a structural echo or parallel: Marvell’s Ode, presenting similar events to Shakespeare’s Tetralogy, structures response to those events in an analogous way, that structure creating a kind of circularity of re-reading.

There is still more in the Tetralogy concerning the consequences of Regicide which might be of relevance to ‘An Horatian Ode’. In particular, the reference to Cain in Bolingbroke’s lines—‘with Cain go wander through the shades of night’—might give us a further clue as to how regicide was viewed in this period. The very next speech in the Tetralogy, quoted earlier, also by Henry IV, underlines the biblical allusion: ‘No more the thirsty entrance of this soil | Shall daub her lips with her own children’s blood’ (*1 Henry IV*, 1.1. 5–6). We are dealing with the banishment of Cain in Genesis:

And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her

⁶⁸ It is characteristic of Marvell that this metaphor can also be read the other way round: Cromwell as the Falconer and England as the Falcon. In this reading Cromwell is more autocratic and potentially sinister than it has been suggested: he is controlling England, rather than being in England’s control. But, of course, this duality fits in well with the idea that this section of the poem finds an apt parallel in *Henry V*, for there is scarcely a point in that play where we are not simultaneously impressed and terrified by Henry’s ruthlessness, perhaps the more so (as in Act 1, Scene 2) where he *appears* to be controlled by his advisors.

mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength.⁶⁹

While Richard's murder is thus being likened to the first murder—Cain's slaying of his brother—the curse on England is like the curse put on the land by God because of this murder. Henry V, despite his apparent success in healing the self-inflicted wounds of England, is still highly anxious about this possible curse just before the battle of Agincourt:

[...]Not today, O Lord,
O not today, think not upon the fault
My father made in compassing the crown.
I Richard's body have interrèd new,
And on it have bestowed more contrite tears
Than from it issued forcèd drops of blood.
Five hundred poor have I in yearly pay
Who twice a day their withered hands hold up
Toward heaven to pardon blood. And I have built
Two chantries, where the sad and solemn priests
Sing still for Richard's soul.
(4.1. 274–284)

Henry (rather like Cromwell in the Ode) seems to have found a specifically military solution to the problems inevitable in the aftermath of civil war, but is still keeping his sword-as-crucifix erect in a desperate attempt to buy forgiveness. But which God is being invoked here? If Henry is imagining that it is the God of the Old Testament who seeks vengeance on England for killing Richard—as the allusions to Genesis seem to suggest—then this is a God whose curse on Cain is still in effect generations later; who promises sevenfold vengeance on anyone who kills Cain and who, two chapters later, vows to 'destroy man [...] from the face of the earth'.⁷⁰ Indeed, Richard's image of God is similarly vengeful and unforgetting, as he is one who will 'strike | Your children yet unborn and unbegot'.⁷¹ This God, we might speculate, would be unwilling to forgive easily the murder of His earthly representative. Given that the Ode evokes lines from *Richard II* that specifically mention the curse of Cain, it is possible that there are shades of this primal curse on the land for Cromwell, as there were for the Bolingbrokes.

⁶⁹ Genesis 4. 10–12.

⁷⁰ Genesis 6. 7.

⁷¹ *Richard II*, 3.3. 86–87.

The situation is even worse than this for Henry (and, perhaps, for Cromwell), because the actual punishment Bolingbroke imagines for Exton ('[w]ith Cain go wander through the shades of night'), whilst alluding to the punishment of Cain, is not identical to it. Cain is sent into perpetual exile, whilst Bolingbroke orders Exton into a shadowy, supernatural world, the precise meaning and function of which (somewhat like that of the much debated ghostly underworld in *Hamlet*) is not entirely clear. With this in mind, we might be tempted to concur, at least in part with A.C. Bradley's judgement of Henry's 'religion' (as demonstrated in his pre-Agincourt soliloquy), that it is 'an attempt to buy off supernatural vengeance for Richard's blood'.⁷² Returning to the imagery of blood in the Tetralogy, we might now view it as having—as well as the Christian connotations of the blood of Christ and hence of forgiveness and the more worrying Old Testament sense of a God-given curse on land for bloodshed—pagan connotations of sacrifice for the appeasement of particular gods. The exchange between Bolingbroke and Richard in the middle of *Richard II* certainly suggests that the play is imaginatively investing in possible interpretations other than the Christian:

Methinks King Richard and myself should meet
 With no less terror than the elements
 Of fire and water when their thundring shock
 At meeting tears the cloudy cheeks of heaven.
 Be he the fire, I'll be the yielding water.
 (3.3. 53–57)

This idea of elemental forces meeting has a distinctly pagan feel where the conflict threatens to 'tear [...] the cloudy cheeks of heaven' rather than worship its God. The Second Tetralogy, then, invests in different worldviews, imagining regicide as a high crime in all of them.

Is something similar happening in 'An Horatian Ode'? To return to the penultimate couplet of that poem, we might also note that the sword's effect might not only be that of a crucifix courting a Christian God's power, but also that suggested by Odysseus and Aeneas using the glint of their swords in the underworld: as a defence against pagan spirits. Re-situating the Ode in a pre-Christian world, this suggests that Cromwell might have to see off a more potent and terrifying curse

⁷² Found in Ronald Berman (ed.), *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Henry V* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1968), p. 99.

whereby the dead King's spirit, like the ghost of Old Hamlet or Richard II, is seeking vengeance for his own murder. Re-reading the Ode with this possibility in mind, the pre-Christian imagery of lines 13–26 might have renewed force and significance. Cromwell, the poem suggests, 'Urged his active Star' (line 12), thus he courts (and pushes) a pagan force, and therefore might be imagined more readily as a Marlovian over-reacher than as a Christian hero. We might think here of the description of Tamburlaine as 'scourge of God'⁷³, with its pointedly double meaning of 'scourge used by God' and 'attacker of God'. As already suggested, it is not entirely clear if the 'force of angry Heavens flame' (line 26) is Cromwell himself or what Cromwell hubristically fights against.

The subsequent image of Cromwell 'burning through the Air' recalls the fire of Richard II with which Bolingbroke imagines clashing and, significantly, it is 'Pallaces and Temples' which he destroys. On a first reading, 'Temples' could simply mean 'churches' as in the high, 'idolatrous' churches which the puritan Cromwell defaced. But subsequently, the idea that (like Marlowe's Tamburlaine) Cromwell might be on the wrong side, *against* God, rather than doing his work becomes a possibility. However, with the meaning of 'Temples' as 'pagan temples' the poem also imagines Cromwell deliberately offending 'the gods' and thus (like Exton, the Bolingbrokes, and England as a whole in Shakespeare's Tetralogy) making enemies in a shadowy underworld against which no amount of military might or Machiavellian scheming will be effective. This might be supported by the strange assertion that Charles, on his execution: 'Nor call'd the *Gods* with vulgar spight | To vindicate his helpless Right' (lines 61–62). The plural '*Gods*', when Marvell is presenting a King, the (singular) Christian God's representative on earth is strange, suggesting that there are conflicting worldviews at work in the Ode.⁷⁴ Indeed, the poem seems to avoid any unequivocal mention of a Christian setting, looking, as we have seen, extensively to classical models, as in the comparison of the beheading of Charles with the worrying occurrences at the building of the Capitol in Rome:

So when they did design
The *Capitols* first Line,

⁷³ Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine Part II*, 4.1, 154 and 5.3, 249. Quoted from J.S. Cunningham and Eithne Henson (eds), *Tamburlaine the Great* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).

⁷⁴ Here the title '*An Horatian Ode*' might be suggestive as to the pre-Christian world it inhabits.

A bleeding Head where they begun,
Did fright the Architects to run;
And yet in that the *State*
Foresaw it's happy Fate.
(lines 67–72)

Again, our first reading might move quickly over the 'bleeding Head' couplet, concentrating on the future 'happy Fate' of Rome which this 'Foresaw'. But re-reading the poem with its conclusion in mind, the bleeding head fable might have a new, and more horrific resonance. The bleeding head echoes the 'bloody hands' of the regicides, and the end of this story—unlike Roman history—is not yet decided. We might also note that the 'happy Fate' is asserted in a trimeter couplet which, to some extent at least, serves to undercut its force. The poem, then, promotes uncertainty as to whether the 'happy Fate' suggested by the analogy can really be foreseen in the case of post-Civil War England.

Whether or not Marvell consciously or unconsciously thought about Shakespeare's earlier depiction of a regicide and civil war when he came to write his own account from the midst of the action is impossible to tell, but we as readers might usefully imagine these texts by Marvell and Shakespeare in parallel, in particular in order to establish a model for the representation of political figures which goes beyond mere statement of opinion. Shakespeare's Second Tetralogy provides a model for representing politics which is not simple or clear-cut, but is based on a constant and necessary thinking and re-thinking. This is a position towards which Cleanth Brooks was moving, half a century ago:

Perhaps the best way therefore in which to approach it ['An Horatian Ode'] is to conceive of it as, say, one would conceive of a Shakespearean tragedy [...] What, for example, is our attitude toward Macbeth? We assume his guilt, but there are qualities which emerge from his guilt which properly excite admiration [...] they force us to exalt him even as we condemn him.⁷⁵

Possibly the analogy with *Macbeth* does not work particularly well and, certainly, Brooks's subsequent comments about 'honesty and insight and whole-mindedness' being found in 'all great poetry' (p. 336) have not aged well. But the challenge to produce a model by which to understand 'An Horatian Ode' that goes beyond the mere assessment of Cromwell is still pressing. At a time when most accounts of the

⁷⁵ Brooks, 'Marvell's "Horatian Ode"', p. 336.

Ode take the central question of the poem as ‘obvious’, and which conclude, more or less in unison, that it answers that question in an affirmative, clear-cut way, we need more than ever to think of ways of reading Marvell’s political masterpiece which are adequate to its brilliant perplexity. One such way, as I hope to have shown, is to think of it in terms of Shakespeare’s Second Tetralogy, as these plays bring with them the necessary complexity of portrayal of a political subject. They also—crucially—bring with them a consciousness of their own inadequacy to the events they describe. In *Henry V* in particular, the Chorus is repeatedly wrong regarding the action which is about to happen, and the Prologue makes it clear that this artistic representation is going to fail to do justice to what it portrays:

[...] pardon, gentles all,
 The flat unraised spirits that hath dared
 On this unworthy scaffold to bring forth
 So great an object. Can this cock-pit hold
 The vasty fields of France? Or may we cram
 Within this wooden O the very casques
 That did affright the air at Agincourt?
 O Pardon.
 (Prologue, 8–14)

The Prologue’s hope is that the audience ‘Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts’ (line 23), and yet this demand entails an admittance that this will not be wholly, or perfectly, possible. Immediately, then, this play poses questions about how ‘the warlike Harry’ (line 5) might be represented, at once hopeful for a ‘muse of fire’ (line 1) but realistically admitting that something imperfect is inevitable.⁷⁶ We might view the Ode as being almost as self-conscious about its own inadequacy as a representation of events as was Shakespeare’s *Henry V*, more explicitly, half a century earlier. In framing the Ode with shadows, and by intertwining Cromwell’s dilemma with that of a flawed writer, the forward youth, Marvell asks similar and similarly challenging questions about political writing to those that Shakespeare did in his great political sequence.

⁷⁶ The description of the writer’s ‘rough and all-unable pen’ (Epilogue, line 1) is also suggestive here.

5. Conclusions

To conclude such an account of a poem, and of a writer, is difficult if only because what has been suggested is not singular but multiple, and not simple and definitive, but complex and provoking of further questions. This thesis began, however, with a discussion of a 'contextual revolution' in Marvell criticism and of the ways in which that revolution provided clear political models for the understanding of Marvell's work. How does a proponent of the contextual revolution summarise 'An Horatian Ode'? It might be supposed that summary in such a critical practice is more viable, given that what is being aimed for is something approaching definitive statement. David Norbrook concludes his account of the poem by stating that 'like Wither, he [Marvell] had helped to lay new foundations, to open up the space for a new or recovered form of writing'.⁷⁷ For Norbrook, the Ode marks the beginning of a new forwardness in Marvell's writing, not only a moment at which he opts for Republican action as opposed to Royalist languor, but also when he argues for an affirmative, positive mode of writing as opposed to a private, withdrawn one. This is a conclusion which sounds powerful, and yet it is not one which entirely stands up to close scrutiny, because the ways in which the Ode views history are too uncertain and tentative, and also because of the haunting, haunted view of writing itself which the Ode posits.

More generally, this thesis has shown that this exploratory, endlessly questioning view of writing is not one that either started or, more importantly in relation to Norbrook's argument, finished with the *Ode and its historical moment*. On the contrary, these are worries that haunted Marvell's writing for decades to come, through both political and personal changes. If Norbrook has little trouble summing up his account of the Horatian Ode, his subsequent appraisal of Marvell's career just after the Ode is, of necessity, somewhat strained, and indicates some of the problems with the kind of critical enterprise in which he is engaged:

It was rather ironic that at the moment of completing this masterpiece of anti- or semi-Horatianism, Marvell should have been plunged into the classic situation of Horatian retirement. But the offer of tutoring Fairfax's daughter must have looked hard to refuse [...] The creative energies involved in the 'Ode', however, do seem to have experienced a kind of stifling, as can be seen in its odd after-life. First of all

⁷⁷ *Writing the English Republic*, p. 269.

Marvell attacked its own assumptions in 'Tom May's Death'; then he reworked it in *The First Anniversary*. Repressed by circumstance, the 'Ode' returned. (p. 271)

It is to Norbrook's credit that he does not attempt to massage Marvell's career itself in order to prove his point; he does not, for example, try to excise 'Tom May's Death' from the canon of Marvell's poems, or argue (as would be more plausible) that it was written in the Restoration. Nevertheless, Norbrook's attempt to fit Marvell's career into a Republican model has something of the character of forcing a square peg into a round hole. The irony that Norbrook describes depends on a reading of the Ode which is, as we have seen, highly questionable. One of the tenets of this reading is that Marvell's poem is anti-Horatian—that is, it takes Horace's model for the retired poet and inverts it—and yet Norbrook apparently loses faith in this argument even as he recapitulates it, given that he seems unsure whether the poem is actually 'anti' or is only 'semi' Horatian. Is it really 'ironic' at all that Marvell should take employment with Fairfax, or is it reasonably consistent with the Ode as it stands? Did Marvell really have any particular impulse to 'refuse' Fairfax's offer of employment, or is it the case, as is argued in this chapter, that the Ode does not clearly and unequivocally present forwardness as a desirable option in the first place? Were the 'creative energies' of 'An Horatian Ode' really 'stifled' and 'repressed' until Marvell wrote 'The First Anniversary'—a period which saw Marvell write, amongst other things, the openly anti-Republican 'Tom May's Death', as well as the wonderfully creative and complex 'Upon Appleton House'—or might we conclude that those 'creative energies', rather narrowly defined in Norbrook's reading, were in fact more complex and fertile than such a reading itself would allow? Is there really such a 'staggering reversal' (p. 272) between 'An Horatian Ode' and 'Tom May's Death', or is the reading of the Ode that necessitates this conclusion itself in error? In short, does Marvell's subsequent career not argue, rather powerfully, that the 'assumptions' for which Norbrook argues so ingeniously, are not assumptions present in Marvell's Ode at all, but have in fact been read into the poem by a critic keen to appropriate Marvell's voice for a Republican tradition which, by his own admission, is in need of the support of a powerful voice such as Marvell's?

I put these points as questions, because I would hope that such issues could be a starting point for a more constructive dialogue between critical traditions than has heretofore been the case. It is to be expected that there should be a desire for Marvell

to be a part of such a study as *Writing the English Republic*, and in some respects part of the Republican tradition which that book depicts. But it is also important to note the ways in which Marvell's work sits uneasily with such a narrative, and one such way is that he fails to invest wholly in 'a new [...] form of writing'; in the understandable haste to place Marvell securely in a Republican tradition, something of the individuality of Marvell's voice as a writer is lost. Norbrook is, as we have seen, not alone, and this kind of loss has been all too common in recent years.

What is unique about the Marvellian voice is a question this thesis has attempted to explore. The answer, as will be apparent by now, finds its centre in a profound and repeated interrogation of the act of writing itself. It is possible to contextualise such interrogation in Marvell's genuinely turbulent historical period, as well as in the huge changes which seized writing—its production, reception, and distribution—during Marvell's own lifetime. However, many others lived through these changes and produced writing which was entirely different from Marvell's. Marvell's works are compelling not because of their political commitment, though as we have seen some of them are admirably politically committed. Nor are they perennially interesting because they transcend the politics of their time, and take a balanced, uncommitted view: as we have seen, Marvell's politics are often very far from being balanced. What is unique about Marvell's writing is that, closely engaging with its historical moment, it has a scrupulous and tough-minded relation to that context, neither claiming too much for itself, nor descending into hopelessness. Marvell, more often than not, makes writing his subject under these difficult circumstances and does so in such a way as to insist on the problems inherent in the interventions of that particular art. Marvell's writing, then, remains relentlessly exploratory, always asking and re-asking the most searching questions about itself, and always both affirming, and worrying, that '*Art* indeed is Long, but *Life* is Short'.

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